– LATIN AMERICA@WAR 30 –

REVOLUCIÓN LIBERTADORA

VOLUME 1: THE 1955 COUP D'ÉTAT IN ARGENTINA

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FOREWORD

There is a fact, as memorable as it is forgotten, that happened in the Argentine Republic, in distant South America: for many years, any reference to the subject of the revolution of 1955 was omitted in the press and later, only hinted at. It was barely remembered when the 50th anniversary of the event was celebrated in 2005. Today, after 67 years, we once again ask ourselves some questions that we observe in the historical field. The phrase 'coup d'état' is closely associated with South America. When a society does not know what to expect in fundamental matters, violence invades power relations. One of the most remembered in the memory of Argentines was the one that overthrew the constitutional president, Juan Domingo Perón, called the 'Liberating Revolution' which happened in September 1955. However, before that, there was a bloody coup attempt that involved combat aviation, which nobody wants to remember…

The recurring history of revolutions in which Argentine military aviation was involved and its consequences is something that we have been exposing with the author at several Aviation Congresses, such as the mythical escape of Perón into exile to Paraguay from the waters of the Río de la Plata in a PBY-5A Catalina, a terrifying experience for him who was very afraid of flying. As Minister of War on 4 July 1945 he was travelling to Córdoba with some military visitors from several countries on the Douglas DC-3 serial T-169, crewed by Lieutenant G. Ruzo and Commander L. Ríos, escorted by a squad of three Curtiss Hawk 75-0 fighters. Flying in heavy cloud, the DC-3 crew tried desperately to find a way out of there and in doing so, one of the Douglas's propellers shattered the tail of one of the Hawks, serial C-607, which plunged to the ground, causing the death of its pilot, Ensign A. Bertollo. The DC-3 that was carrying Perón had its right engine almost detached from the wing and suffered damage to the fuselage. It made an emergency landing in a field, where it taxied for more than a kilometre until the pilot managed to stop.

From then on, Perón wanted to know little about aeroplanes, but there were still stories for a while. After an attempted coup on 4 October 1951, there was a purge in the armed forces, and President Juan Domingo Perón appointed Brigadier General Gustavo Hermansson as Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force. At the inauguration ceremony, held in Ezeiza International Airport near Buenos Aires, Hermansson awarded the President the Air Force pilot wings (brevet), saying, 'You have honoured them for 25 years.' Perón was not an aviator, although he had a Fairchild PT-19 Cornell Mk II that was given to him, registered in the National Aircraft Registry with his initials LV-JDP.

When Perón came to power on 4 June 1946, the Second World War had barely finished. He received a country with its coffers full of foreign currency and gold, due to exports during the war. His government promoted very populist policies that attracted crowds, good at first, but the money was spent quickly. During his second term, 1951–1955, the government generated an economic crisis and a social rift that became increasingly antagonistic. If to this scenario we add some Argentine ingredients: military, political, and the Catholic Church, the cocktail became very explosive.

In this work, the author explores the use of aeroplanes in these riots, which have the same capacity to make progress, as they have to sow destruction. Argentina, thanks to the loans accumulated by countries like England for food sent during the First World War, agreed to pay that debt in manufactured products. Thus, the country received a great variety of aeroplanes, more than 400, coming to have at one time more aircraft than pilots to fly them. Its young air force was the best equipped in Latin America, the first to operate the then modern Gloster Meteor fighter-interceptor jets and Avro Lincoln and Lancaster strategic bombers, and its officer corps was very loyal to the laws and the constitution. On the other hand, the Navy was different since it had American doctrine and flight equipment. It always maintained a marked elitist difference from the other armed forces. Its officers came from a high social class and therefore it was aligned to the political ideas of the ultra-right and certain wealthy classes, who had no qualms about convincing them to use their weapons.

Like Picasso's *Guernica*, a work of art that represents a direct allegory of how wars affect the suffering and pain of the civilian population, a group of Argentine military personnel, in collusion with political and ecclesiastical sectors, precipitated its people to repeat the same Dantesque scene, this time in the federal capital, although in a minor scale.

On Thursday, 16 June 1955, thousands of people as usual were on the streets of downtown Buenos Aires. Some curious citizens had heard something about an air parade, and they were in the Plaza de Mayo looking up at the sky. At around 12:40 p.m., some Naval Aviation North American AT-6, PBY-5A Catalina and Beechcraft AT-11 planes appeared on the horizon. But they were not there for a parade; they were there to simply bomb Government House in an attempted coup against Juan Domingo Perón. This raid left behind more than 300 dead, 600 wounded and destruction everywhere. The Army units that should have been mobilised to support the uprising never did. The coup attempt was aborted within a few hours. But unlike the bombing of the city of Guernica in 1937, the planes that bombed and the pilots who flew them were national forces. Perón would be finally overthrown three months later by the so-called Liberating Revolution.

The performance of the Argentine military aviation had unlikely edges. The initial, poorly planned attack by the Navy was postponed until noon due to fog. A group that took over the Morón Air Force Base, took off in some Gloster Meteors to attack government targets. They destroyed part of the centre of Buenos Aires, and later ended up in a rout, leaving aeroplanes and pilots interned in Montevideo, Uruguay.

The bombing of 1955 was carefully planned by the Navy starting in 1953. And how little memory will we Argentines have? The same Navy would be the one that planned and got us years later, in the war for the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands...

Esteban Raczynski, B.A.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Revolución Libertadora* (the Liberating Revolution) of 1955 is the name by which the military government that ruled the Republic of Argentina is known after overthrowing the constitutional president, Lieutenant General Juan Domingo Perón. This revolution also closed the National Congress, deposed the members of the Supreme Court and the provincial and municipal and university authorities through a coup that began on 16 September 1955. Major General Eduardo Lonardi, the leader of the coup, took office on 23 September that year, but a couple of months later, on 13 November, he was replaced by General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu through a palace coup. Both generals ruled as supreme authorities, claiming the title of President of the Nation.

Among the supporters of Peronism, the rebels were called 'gorillas'[1] as they used brute force to overthrow a democratically elected president, and their government was later known as the *Revolución Fusiladora* (Fusilier Revolution) due to the military and civilians who had been shot by order of the de facto president General Aramburu on the occasion of the attempted uprising led by General Juan José Valle in 1956. In less than 48 hours, civilians and soldiers were shot in Lanús, La Plata, José León Suárez, Campo de Mayo, the Army Mechanics School and the National Penitentiary. By 11 June 1956, they had executed 16 military personnel and 13 civilians.

Although numerous books and articles have been written about this event in Spanish, this concise story is perhaps one of the first in the English language that covers all the 1955 events in detail. In the first place, the previous revolutions and coups d'état of the twentieth century in Argentina will be briefly discussed. Then, in order to meet the main protagonist of the events of 1955, a short biography of Juan Domingo Perón follows. Later, some events that happened during Perón's second government are covered, such as some failed coup attempts, the confrontation with the Argentine Catholic Church, and the conspiracies of the Navy, up to the most tragic and violent event: the bombing raid of Plaza de Mayo in June 1955. This first volume ends there, and the second volume will cover the September 1955 coup, where the so-called Liberating Revolution will be detailed, day by day, through which the resignation of President Perón was achieved and finally, the last chapter will be about the long exile of the former Argentine president and his subsequent return, after 18 years, for his third and final presidential term.

1

BACKGROUND

The antecedents of the *Revolución Libertadora* refer to the historical events that led to a coup in Argentina between 16 and 23 September 1955 that overthrew the constitutional President Lieutenant General Juan Domingo Perón and established a civic-military government that called itself the Liberating Revolution.

During the twentieth century, Argentina, like many other Latin American countries, had a series of revolutions and coups d'état. Just to cite the most important, there was the Radical Revolution of 1905, the coup of 6 September 1930, the failed Radical Revolution of 1932 and the coup of 4 June 1943. The failed coup of 16 September 1951 will be covered in a separate chapter.

In 1897, Hipólito Yrigoyen, in disagreement with Bernardo de Irigoyen, dissolved the UCR (*Unión Cívica Radical*, Radical Civic Union) Committee of the province of Buenos Aires, and the party practically ceased to exist. This led to the formation of a nucleus of radicals who recognised Hipólito Yrigoyen as their chief, who in 1903 began the re-founding and reorganisation of the party. On 29 February 1904, the National Committee of the UCR declared an electoral abstention throughout the country in the elections for representatives of the nation, of senators for the capital, electors of president and vice-president of the nation, and they announced the armed struggle. At that time, Manuel Quintana was the president, a representative of the National Autonomist Party. On 4 February 1905, there were armed uprisings in the federal capital, Campo de Mayo, Bahía Blanca, Mendoza, Córdoba and Santa Fé, with the purpose of overthrowing the authorities who, for their part, were aware of the conspiracy and decreed a state of siege throughout the country for 90 days. In the federal capital, the coup plotters failed to gain control of the war arsenal in Buenos Aires when General Carlos Smith, chief of the Army General Staff, displaced the Yrigoyen soldiers. Loyalist troops and police soon recovered the police stations taken by surprise, and the revolutionary cantons. In Córdoba the rebels captured Vice-President José Figueroa Alcorta and threatened to kill him if President Manuel Quintana did not resign; he did not yield and the threat was not carried out. They also arrested Francisco Julián Beazley, former Buenos Aires police chief, but not former president Julio Argentino Roca, who managed to escape to Santiago del Estero. In Mendoza, the rebels took 300,000

Some important Argentine presidents of the first half of the twentieth century. Top row, from left to right: Manuel Quintana (1904–1906), Hipólito Yrigoyen (1916–1922 & 1928–1930), José Félix Uriburu (1930–1932) and Agustín Pedro Justo (1932–1938). Bottom row, from left to right: Roberto Marcelino Ortíz (1938–1942), Ramón S. Castillo (1942–1943), Pedro Pablo Ramírez (1943–1944) and Edelmiro Julián Farrell (1944–1946). (Open source)

pesos from the *Banco de la Nación* and attacked the barracks defended by Lieutenant Basilio Pertiné. The uprising of troops in Bahía Blanca and other places did not find support from the population. The fighting only continued in Córdoba and Mendoza until 8 February, but finally the rebels were defeated and prosecuted, receiving penalties of up to eight years in jail in the Ushuaia prison.

Years later, the military coup of 6 September 1930 was led by General José Félix Uriburu and overthrew President Hipólito Yrigoyen of the Radical Civic Union, who had been democratically elected to exercise his second term in 1928. Paradoxically, General Uriburu had been one of the organisers of the revolution of 1890, a civic-military uprising that gave rise to the Radical Civic Union. Yrigoyen was the first constitutional president to be overthrown by a triumphant revolution and for the first time in Argentine history a government dissolved the National Congress. On 10 September, Uriburu was recognised as Provisional President of the Nation by the Supreme Court through the agreement that gave rise to the doctrine of de facto governments, and that would be used to legitimise all other military coups. Uriburu appointed a civilian to the post of Minister of Economy, José S. Pérez, who was linked to the large landowners and the most conservative sectors. He basically represented a neo-corporatist Catholic nationalism. One of Uriburu's first measures was to establish an illegal repressive state structure, creating a 'Special Section' of the police to systematically use torture against opponents, being the first to use electricity for this purpose, using electric prods designed for cattle. The Special Section continued to be active in subsequent governments including the ones of Juan Domingo Perón. Having no political support to establish the political regime that he proposed, Uriburu called for elections but decided to ban the participation of radicalism in them. This democratic reinstatement was fallacious, restricted and controlled by the armed forces and gave rise to a series of fraudulent and corrupt conservative governments over a time that became known as the 'Infamous Decade'. On 20 February 1932, General José Félix Uriburu handed over power to General Agustín P. Justo, the true material force of the coup, who wanted a conservative and restricted democratic government.

In 1932 a group of civilians and soldiers belonging to the Radical Civic Union tried to overthrow the government headed by President Agustín P. Justo and replace it with a transitory Revolutionary Junta that would call elections within a year. It had the support of an important portion of the Army, led by Lieutenant Colonel Atilio Cattaneo and Major Regino Lascano. The outbreak of the revolution was to take place on 18 December 1932 through a massive uprising, and the arrest of the President and the main government leaders was scheduled. On 13 December, several radical assemblies were held in different places in Buenos Aires, such as universities or bars, but they were repressed by the mounted police and 159 people were arrested. On 16 December, in a house in Buenos Aires where weapons and information about the revolution were kept, a homemade bomb exploded that was being prepared by two conspirators, which led to an investigation and the subsequent discovery of the conspiracy.

Meanwhile, in the city of Rosario – and after wounding the head of the Security Squad, Major César Reyes – a group of civilians tried to take over the unit of the School of Cadets, at 2050 Alem Street, and as a consequence of that, 32 radical militants were killed in the confrontation. The government declared a state of siege and made numerous arrests. With its main leaders imprisoned or exiled, the UCR entered a period of lethargy.

The revolution of 1943, which originated in the military coup of 4 June of that year, had different characteristics from all the previous ones:

- Ramón Castillo, the ousted president, was part of the conservative regime known as the 'Infamous Decade', which originated in the military coup of 1930 and was supported by widespread electoral fraud, repression and corruption
- It was the only military coup that took place in the middle of a world war
- It did not maintain alliance relations with the large landowners and businessmen
- Its origin was linked to pressure from the United States for Argentina to abandon its traditional neutralism in the face of the Second World War, in order to affect British interests in the country and replace Great Britain as the dominant economic power in Argentina
- It was the only coup in Argentina that was purely and exclusively military, without civilian support
- It put an end to a whole system of conservative and fraudulent government established in 1930 which had intentions of permanence
- Like every institutional breakdown in Argentina, it was very harmful in terms of democratic quality, since even after eliminating the 'patriotic fraud' of the previous decade, the nefarious 'line of succession' to the head of the government continued in the future

The revolution of 1943 was a confusing political process during which various groups, many of them without prior prominence in Argentine history, fought for power. The coup did not aim to remain in power, so it was a transitory dictatorship. All the military groups that fought for power during the 1943 revolution were markedly anti-communist and maintained close relations with the Catholic Church, which regained a solid presence (lost since the nineteenth century), especially in the field of education. The internal struggles unleashed two coups in the palace, succeeding three dictators in power who carried the title of president: Army Generals Arturo Rawson, Pedro Pablo Ramírez and Edelmiro Farrell. During this period the Argentine unions, mainly the socialists and the revolutionary unionists, made an alliance with a sector of young Army officers led by Colonel Juan Perón, constituting a successful labour-nationalist trend, which finally ended up dominating and gaining the support of the working class, expanding fully and acquiring the name of 'Peronism'. The period was characterised by an extreme polarisation of social classes, and also led to the formation of a large, strongly anti-Peronist social block, mostly made up of the middle and upper sectors. Economically the revolution of 1943 was characterised by a continuing policy of industrialisation by import substitution that came from previous years. The dictatorship ended with a call for democratic elections held on 24 February 1946, which all sectors accepted as impeccable, in which Juan Domingo Perón triumphed; he took office on 4 June of that year.

2

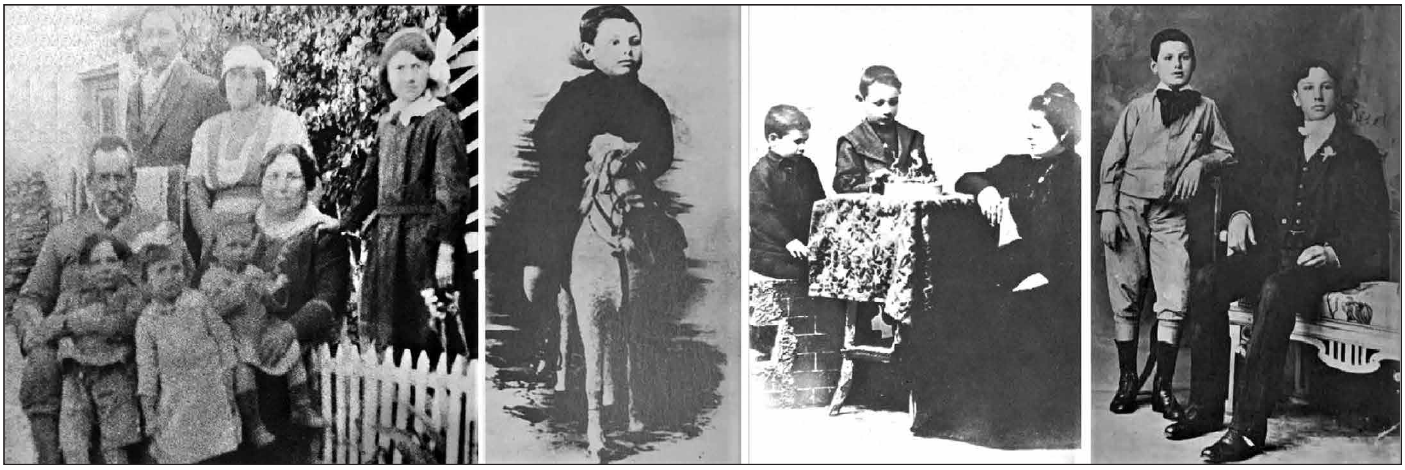
JUAN DOMINGO PERÓN (1895–1974)

Juan Domingo Perón was born on 8 October 1895 in Lobos, province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Soldier, politician and writer, he was three-times president of Argentina and the founder of Peronism, one of the most important popular movements and political parties of his country. He was elected president of Argentina three times democratically and by universal suffrage, in fair elections that were guaranteed by the armed forces. His parents were Mario Tomás Perón (1867–1928) and Juana Salvadora Sosa (1874–1953), and he had two brothers, Mario and Alberto, with Juan Domingo being the middle child. Tomás Perón, his grandfather, served in the Senate, was president of the National Council of Hygiene, an army doctor during the war against Paraguay, and professor of medicine.

Juan Domingo would be raised in the rural areas of Lobos during his first five years. In 1900, the family moved to a ranch in the zone of Rio Gallegos, in Patagonia. A couple of years later, they moved north to Cabo Raso, in Chubut, and in 1904, to Camarones, where his father was appointed as the local judge. Perón's family was constantly on the move and in 1906 his father bought a ranch which was baptised 'La Porteña', 175 kilometres from the city of Comodoro Rivadavia.

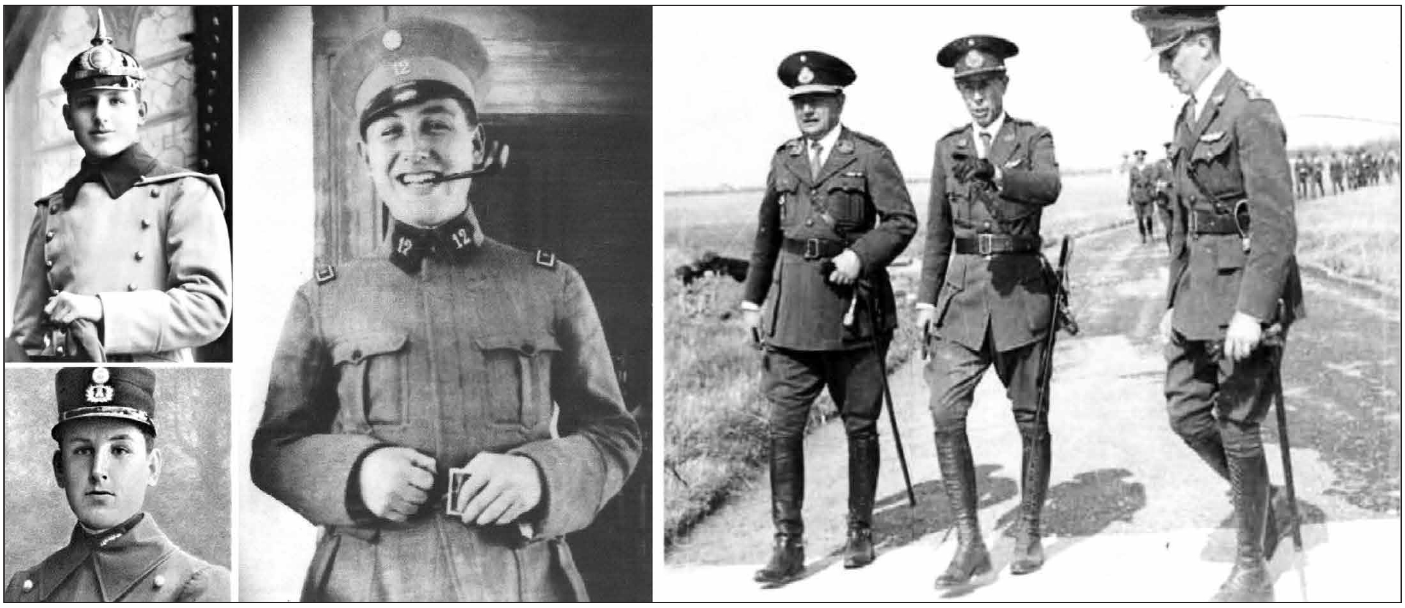
It was then that Perón's parents decided to send their children to live in Buenos Aires so that they could start formal studies, being in the care of their paternal grandmother, Dominga Dutey, and the father's two half-sisters, Vicenta and Baldomera Martirena, who were teachers. The two children saw the big city for the first time and would only see their parents during the summer. Juan Domingo studied first at the school that was next to his house, where his aunts were teachers and then at various other schools until he completed his primary education, and later carried out polytechnic secondary studies at the International School of Olivos. He was called 'Pocho' in his inner circle.

Perón had three wives: on 5 January 1929 he married Aurelia Gabriela Tizón (1902–1938), who died of uterine cancer. On 22 October 1945, he married the actress Eva Duarte, known as 'Evita' (1919–1952). On 26 July 1952, while Perón was serving as president for the second time, Evita died after a long fight against uterine cancer. After Evita's death, Perón had an illegal love affair for two years with Nelly Haydeé Rivas, a 14-year-old girl who belonged to the UES (*Unión de Estudiantes Secundarios*, Union of High School Students), a political organisation created by Peronism in 1953 for recreational and sports activities. Later, the young girl was persecuted and was sent to a juvenile correctional centre. Her parents were Peronist activists and in one way or another, they had allowed their youngest daughter to become romantically and sexually involved with Perón,



Scenes from Perón's childhood. From left to right: baby Juan Domingo on his mother's lap posing with the rest of the family; a three-year-old Perón; brothers Juan Domingo and Mario with their mother in 1899; and both brothers years later. (Archivo General de la Nación)

Perón was married three times, to: Aurelia Tizón from 1929 to 1938 (left); Eva Duarte from 1945 to 1952 (centre top); and María Estela Martínez from 1961 to 1974 (centre bottom). Between 1953 and 1955, Perón had an illegal love affair with Nelly Rivas, a 14-year-old student (right). (Archivo General de la Nación)



Juan Domingo Perón at the beginning of his military career. From left to right: two photos of a young Perón as a cadet at the Military School; Lieutenant Perón when he served in the 12th Infantry Regiment in Paraná; and Captain Perón (first from the right) along with other army officers. (Archivo General de la Nación) which was a crime of rape, and as a result of that, both were sent to jail. On 15 November 1961, Perón married María Estela Martínez, later known as Isabel Perón or 'Isabelita', in Spain, who later accompanied him as vice-president in the September 1973 elections and succeeded him in office upon his death, until 24 March 1976, when she was overthrown by a military coup.

Juan Perón had no children, so his closest descendants were his nephews, the children of his brother Avelino Mario Perón and Eufemia Jáuregui: Dora Alicia, Eufemia Mercedes, María Juana, Mario Alberto, Olinda Argentina, Lía Vicenta, Amalia Josefa, Antonio Avelino and Tomás Perón.

CASSA DI RISPARMIO
DELLA PROVINCIA DI BOLZANO

Lieutenant Colonel Perón with two officers of the Royal Italian Army during his stay in Italy in 1939. (Open source)

On 1 March 1911, he began to study at the National Military School, thanks to the scholarship that Antonio M. Silva, a close friend of his paternal grandfather, obtained for him. He graduated on 18 December 1913 as an infantry second lieutenant. In 1914 he was assigned to the 12th Infantry Regiment based in Paraná, Entre Ríos, where he remained until 1919. In 1915, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant.

During the radical governments (1916–1930) Perón assumed a position close to the legalistic nationalist military and was at the same time critical of the radical government, mainly because of the well-known workers' massacre, the 'Tragic Week' of 1919. He considered the radical government 'inoperative' in the face of the country's serious social problems.

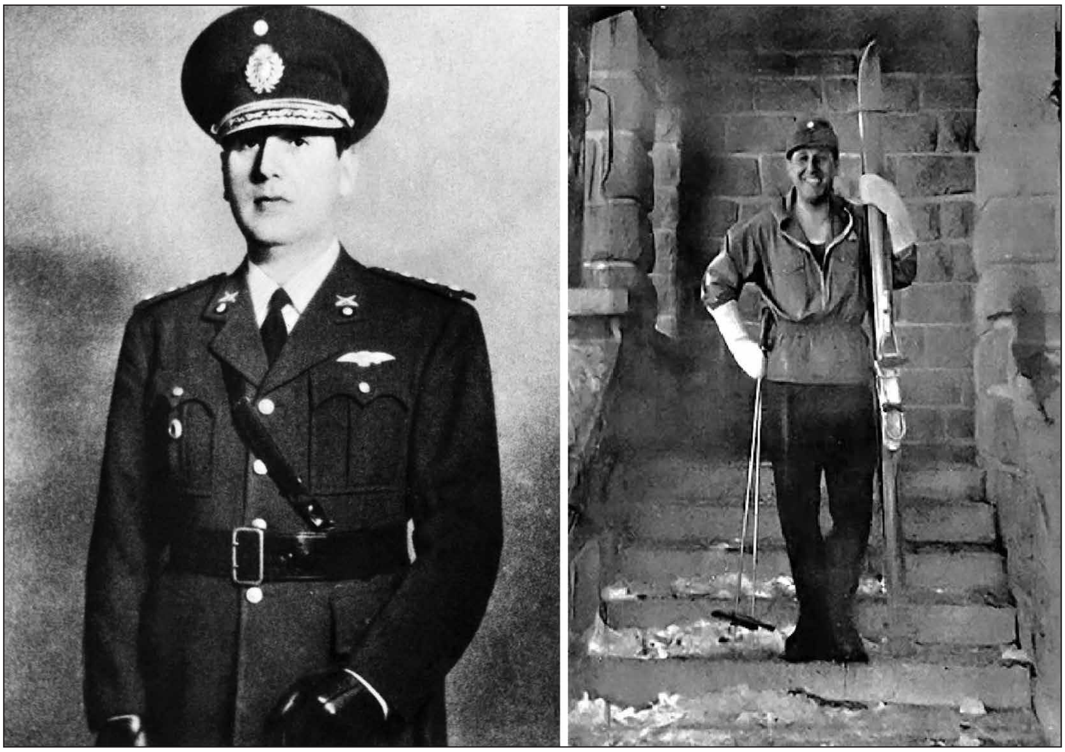
While on duty in the 12th Infantry Regiment in Paraná under the command of General Oliveira Cézar, Lieutenant Perón was sent with a platoon to intervene militarily in the forestry workers' strike of 1917 and 1919. His position, though, was that in no case should the Army repress the strikers.

He gave great importance to sports, especially boxing, athletics and fencing. In 1918, he became the military and national champion of fencing. He wrote several sports texts for military training. On 31 December 1919 he was promoted to first lieutenant and in 1924 to captain. In 1926, he entered the Superior War College. In those years he wrote several texts that were used as study materials in military academies, such as *Military Hygiene* (1924), *Military Morale* (1925), *The Alto Perú Campaign* (1925), *The Eastern Front in the World War of 1914, Strategic Studies* (1928), among others. On 12 January 1929, he obtained his diploma as a General Staff officer and on 26 February he was assigned to the Army General Staff as an assistant to Colonel Francisco Fasola Castaño, deputy chief of the General Staff.

In 1920, he was transferred to the Sargento Cabral NCO School in Campo de Mayo, where he excelled as a troop instructor. He distinguished himself early among other colleagues for his special interest in treatment of his men, which quickly made him a charismatic soldier.

In 1930, he was appointed professor of military history at the School of War. That year there was the coup d'état on 6 September, led by General José Félix Uriburu, who overthrew the constitutional president Hipólito Yrigoyen. The coup had the support of a wide spectrum that included radicals, socialists, conservatives, employers' and student organisations, the judiciary, as well as the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom. Perón did not hold any position in the dictatorial government of Uriburu, but he participated marginally in the preparation of the coup as part of an autonomous group with a 'legalistic nationalist' tendency, led by Lieutenant Colonels Bartolomé Descalzo and José María Sarobe, who criticised the 'oligarchic conservative' group surrounding Uriburu. This group tried to give a broad popular support to the movement and prevent the installation of a military dictatorship, an event that finally happened. Perón was part of a column that peacefully evicted the Casa Rosada (Government House),[1] where civil groups were looting and destroying. After the coup, the military group of Lieutenant Colonels Descalzo and Sarobe, in which Perón participated, was dismantled by the military dictatorship, sending its members abroad or to distant positions in the interior of the country. Perón himself would be assigned to the Border Commission, having to move to the northern border. The Uriburu dictatorship (1930–1932) organised elections in which Hipólito Yrigoyen was outlawed and restricted the possibilities of Yrigoyen radicalism to act, thus facilitating the electoral victory of a coalition of anti-Yrigoyenist, conservative and socialist radicals, called the 'Concordancia' (Concordance), which would govern in successive fraudulent electoral turns until 1943. This stage is known in Argentine history as the 'Infamous Decade.'

On 31 December 1931, Perón was promoted to the rank of major. In 1932, he was appointed aide-de-camp to the Minister of War. He wrote new publications such as *Notes on Military History, The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905* and *Araucanian Toponymy.* On 26 January 1936, he was appointed military attaché at the Argentine embassy in Chile, a position to which a few months later he added the aeronautical attaché. On 31 December of that year, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. He returned to Argentina in March 1938, being assigned to the General Staff of the Army. That year, his



Perón in the uniform of a colonel in the Argentine Army (left) and serving as commander of a mountain unit in Mendoza in late 1941. (Archivo General de la Nación)

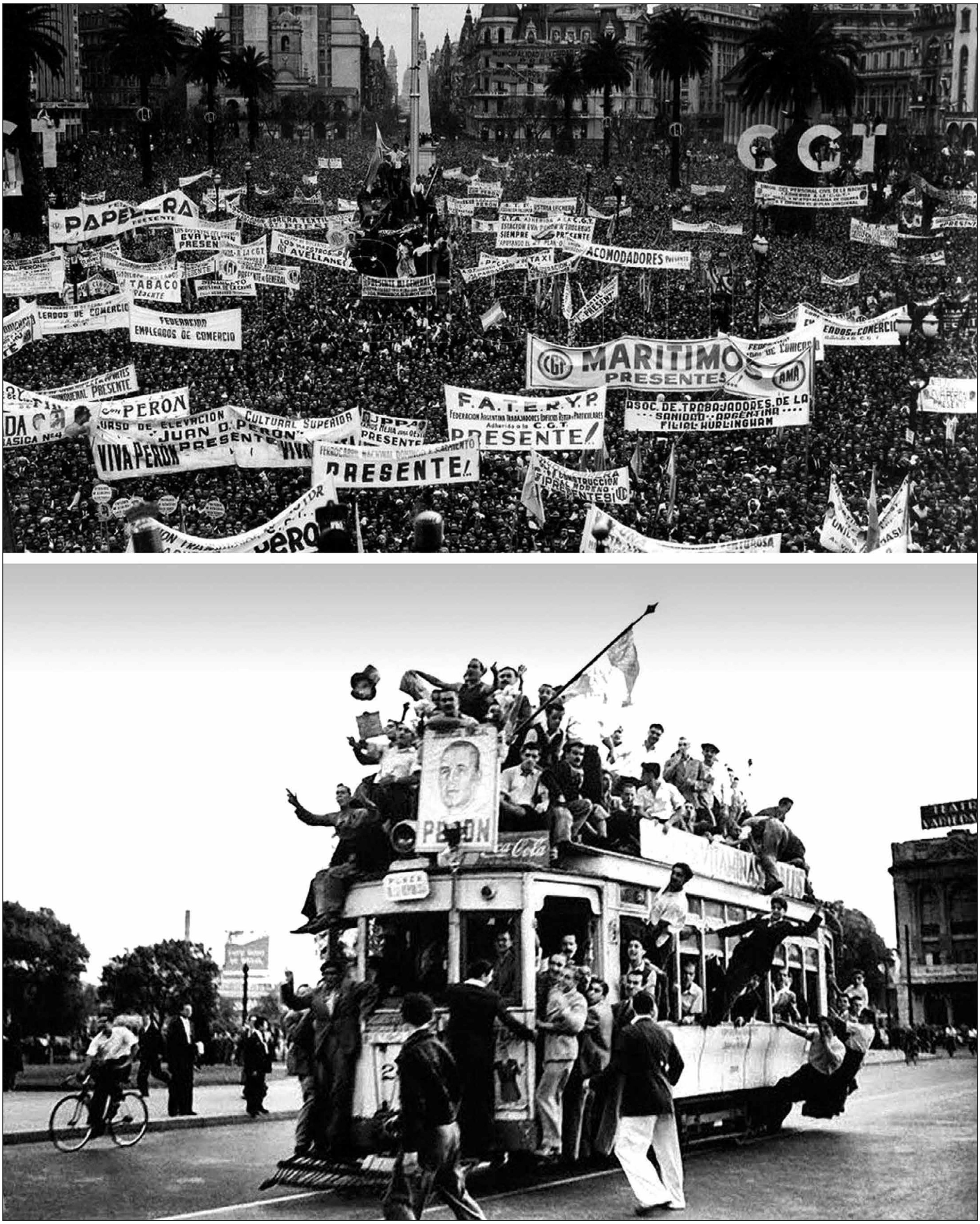
Perón addressing a gathering of workers when he was the head of the National Labour Department in 1943. (Archivo General de la Nación)

wife Aurelia became very sick and finally died of uterine cancer on 10 September.

On 17 February 1939, he was sent to Italy aboard the Italian liner *Conte Grande* for training courses in various disciplines, such as economics, mountaineering, skiing and high mountain operations. From 1 July 1939 to 31 May 1940, Perón served in various alpine units of the *Regio Esercito* (Italian Royal Army). He also visited Germany, France, Spain, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania and the Soviet Union. The organisation and mobilisation of the German and Italian peoples under Hitler and Mussolini fascinated him and he was also interested in the use of mass spectacle as a political tool. He returned to Argentina in the final days of 1940. He gave a series of conferences on the state of the war situation in Europe, in the framework of the Second World War (1939–1945).

On 8 January 1941, Perón was assigned to a mountain unit in the province of Mendoza, to get him away from the Buenos Aires conspiratorial outbreaks. There he published an article and instructions on the mountain commandos. On 31 December of that year, he was promoted to colonel and became commanding officer of a detachment of mountain troops. On 18 March 1942, he was transferred to the inspectorate of mountain troops in Buenos Aires, under the command of General Edelmiro J. Farrell.

On 4 June 1943, a coup d'état overthrew the government of the conservative president Ramón Castillo. General Rawson had left Campo de Mayo leading an Army column of 10,000 effectives towards the Casa Rosada. Castillo, then 70 years old, could not find any Army unit to defend his government and decided to board the Navy minesweeper ARA *Drummond* which headed across the river. He put ashore at La Plata and submitted his resignation. The Castillo government was the last of a series of governments in the 'Infamous Decade', imposed by the dictatorship of General José Félix Uriburu (1930–1931) and sustained by electoral fraud. General Arturo Rawson took office, but three days later he was in turn dismissed by General Pedro Pablo Ramírez, whose de facto government was officially recognised by the Supreme Court. Perón did not hold any position in the Rawson government, but during President Ramírez's administration, Perón became the head of the National Labour Department on 27 October 1943, which was at that time a small state agency of little political importance, a sort of 'elephants' graveyard'. Perón's observation of organised labour in Mussolini's Italy may have inspired him to think of the potential power of the labour movement in Argentina. The National Labour Department had existed for more than 40 years, and it had been only a statistics-gathering agency with very limited authority. Perón would change that radically and asked President Ramírez to convert the department into the Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare, which was finally created through a presidential decree. Perón, from his position as the Secretary of Labour and Welfare of the Nation, began to link with union leaders, which would be of utmost importance in the future, since he would have the unrestricted support of hundreds of thousands of workers throughout the country. As Secretary of Labour, he carried out a remarkable work, having approved the labour laws that had been historically demanded by the Argentine labour movement (such as: generalisation of the severance pay that had existed since 1934 for commercial employees; retirements for commercial employees; statute of the ranch worker; creation of labour justice; bonuses; giving more efficiency to the existing labour police to ensure its application, among other things), which became generalised as a basic regulation of the relationship between capital and labour.


CGT
PAPEL-RA PRESENTE
TABACO PRESENTE
FEDERACION EMPLEADOS DE COMERCIO
ACOMODADORES PRESENTE
AVELLANEDA
CGT MARITIMOS PRESENTES
AMA
F.A.T.E.R.Y.P
FEDERACION ARGENTINA TRABAJADORES OFICIOS RURALES Y PARTICULARES
Adherida a la C.G.T.
PRESENTE!
ASOC. DE TRABAJADORES DE LA SANIDAD ARGENTINA FILIAL HURLINGHAM
PERON
CURSO DE ELEVACION CULTURAL SUPERIOR JUAN D. PERON PRESENTE
VIVA PERON
PRESENTE!
PERON
Coca-Cola

The massive mobilisation of workers in support of Perón on 17 October 1945. (Archivo General de la Nación)

Perón also served as the private secretary of General Edelmiro Farrell, who had been in charge of the Ministry of War since 4 June 1943. In February 1944, the Farrell-Perón duo displaced Ramírez from the presidency, and Perón was appointed to the strategic position of Minister of War on 24 February, and the next day Farrell became President of the Nation. During 1944, Farrell decisively promoted the labour reforms proposed by the Ministry of Labour, especially those that Perón had made.

Meanwhile, relations between Argentina and the United States had not been good, especially due to the declaration of neutrality of Argentina at the beginning of the Second World War, which had a lot of sympathy for the Axis nations. The American government's pressure finally made Argentina break relations with the Axis only at the beginning of 1944. Perón, in his capacity as Minister of War, then sought the support of the American government to acquire arms, since due to the previous position of neutrality Argentina had not received any. Furthermore, Brazil had received a large amount, thus breaking the military balance between the two South American powers. The Washington government was still reluctant to sell arms to Argentina and eventually they would be obtained from England, due to the debt accumulated in the provision of raw materials during the years of the Second World War. Further, relations between Perón and the American Ambassador Spruille Braden were always very tense. Braden would be later replaced by Edward R. Stettinius, who took steps to improve relations. At the Inter-American conference in Chapultepec in Mexico City, conditions were established that included the declaration of war on the Axis nations, the repression of all Axis activity in Argentina, and the signing of all the agreements of that conference. Finally, the Argentine government accepted all the conditions, and relations with the United States were resumed, with Argentina being accepted as a full member of the United Nations at the San Francisco conference.

The main characteristic of 1945 in Argentina would be the radicalisation of the political situation between Peronism and anti-Peronism, driven largely by the United States, through its ambassador, Spruille Braden. Henceforth, the Argentine population would be divided into two sides facing each other: Perón's supporters, who were in the majority in the working class, and non-Peronists, who were in the majority in the middle and upper classes (especially Buenos Aires). On 19 September of that year, the opposition appeared united in a huge demonstration of more than 200,000 people, in the so-called 'March for the Constitution and Freedom', mostly made up of middle-class and upper-class people. The march had a large impact on the power of Farrell-Perón and unleashed a succession of military proposals against Perón's permanence in the government that took shape on 8 October when, faced with an adverse vote by the Campo de Mayo officials, who were under the command of General Eduardo J. Ávalos with the support of radicalism through Amadeo Sabattini, Perón resigned from all his positions. On 11 October, the United States asked Great Britain to stop buying Argentine goods for two weeks to bring down the government. On the following day, Perón was arrested and taken to Martín García Island in the River Plate. At that time, the leaders of the opposition movement had the country and the government at their disposal. Perón was understood to be 'a political corpse' and the government, formally chaired by Farrell, was actually in the hands of General Ávalos, who took over as Minister of War in replacement of Perón and only intended to hand over power to civilians as soon as possible. Perón was replaced in the vice presidency by the Minister of Public Works General Juan Pistarini who held both positions, and the head of the Navy, Rear Admiral Héctor Vernengo Lima, assumed the leadership of the Ministry of the Navy. The tension reached a high point when a gigantic civil act attacked the Military Circle and a paramilitary command came to plan the assassination of Perón.

On Wednesday, 17 October 1945, there was a massive mobilisation of between 300,000 and 500,000 workers, who occupied the Plaza de Mayo demanding the freedom of Perón. President Edelmiro J. Farrell maintained a detached attitude. The most anti-Peronist sectors of the government, such as Admiral Vernengo Lima, proposed opening fire on the protesters. The new strongman in the military government, General Eduardo Ávalos, remained passive, hoping that the demonstration would dissolve on its own, and refused to mobilise troops. Finally, faced with the forcefulness of popular pressure, they negotiated with Perón and agreed on the conditions: Perón would speak to the protesters to calm them down, would not make reference to their arrest and would get them to withdraw. On the other hand, the cabinet would resign in its entirety and Ávalos would request his retirement; Perón would also retire and would not hold any position again, but in exchange he demanded that the government call free elections for the first months of 1946. At 11:10 p.m., Perón came out onto a balcony of Government House and spoke to the workers as they celebrated the victory.

After a short period of rest at a farm in San Nicolás, Perón returned to Buenos Aires and finally married Eva Duarte in an intimate civil ceremony at Perón's apartment on Posadas Street in Buenos Aires, on 22 October 1945. The religious ceremony took place in St Francis church in La Plata on 10 December that year. The government decreed that elections would be held on 24 February 1946, and so Perón began his political campaign immediately; he was then a retired Army colonel. A group of union leaders launched the Labour Party (*Partido Laborista*) under the head of Luis Gay and Cipriano Reyes and they chose Perón as their candidate for the elections. Perón also had the support of some ex-Radicals who formed their own party called the Radical Civil Union-Renovating Board (UCRJR) under the leadership of Dr Juan Hortensio Quijano, who was chosen to be Perón's vice-president candidate. Even before he was elected in the 1946 elections, he faced a harsh anti-Peronist opposition. In that year, sectors linked to the powerful Rural Society of Argentina, the local section of the UCR in Corrientes and the Liberal Party of Corrientes, planned to assassinate him during the electoral campaign, while on a visit to the city of Goya. The attack was discovered by the security forces and Perón did not go there, although a large crowd was waiting for him. In any case, some political opponents positioned themselves on various rooftops in that city with weapons and fired at the crowd which was marching towards the centre of Goya to repudiate the attempted plan to kill their leader.

Popular support, organised by the Labour Party and a faction of the UCR called *Junta Renovadora* (Renovation Board), gave the presidency to Perón in the elections of 24 February 1946, being defeated only in Córdoba, Corrientes, San Juan and San Luis. Perón won with 52.4 percent of the vote while José Pascual Tamborini of the Democratic Union (UD) was in second place with 42.51 percent of the vote, 10 points below Perón. In the Electoral College (there was no direct vote then), Perón received 299 electoral votes against only 66 for Tamborini. The Democratic Union collapsed upon its defeat and never recovered, while Perón's allied parties were unified into the *Partido Peronista* (Peronist Party) later that year.

In the final weeks of Edelmiro Farrell's presidency, Perón not only returned to active duty but was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. The promotion took place on 31 May 1946 but was made retroactively effective to 31 December 1945. Some years later, on 1

General Perón, receiving the presidential sash from his predecessor, General Farrel, on the day of his inauguration as president of Argentina. (Archivo General de la Nación)

May 1950, the National Congress approved Law Number 13,896 by which Perón was promoted to major general and on 6 October of that year, he acceded to the highest military rank of army general (later renamed as lieutenant general).

Juan Domingo Perón's first presidential term lasted between 4 June 1946 and 4 June 1952. When Perón assumed the presidency, gold deposits in the Central Bank amounted to some $1,643 million in reserves. That fortune would be the basis of his proselytising action, wasting himself in demagogic acts and ruinous businesses. By the fall of his government in 1955, that reserve had shrunk to just $284 million (with a short-term debt payable of $412 million). His discretionary and abusive handling of the National Treasury was catastrophic for the country's economy.

Months after the elections, the internal disputes within the Labour Party and the Renovation Board, which were giving Perón headaches, the president-elect ordered their dissolution for the formation of a new political party, which at first was called *Partido Único de la Revolución* (Single Party of the Revolution), but shortly after this, it changed the name to *Partido Peronista* (Peronist Party).

One thing is certain: at the beginning of his government, Perón surrounded himself with some collaborators with brilliant minds, but as time went by, he replaced them with more obsequious and mediocre assistants, who would accept everything without questioning absolutely anything.

At that time, Argentina was governed by the Constitution of 1853, which made re-election possible but not immediately, since there had to be an alternation of at least one period. Perón commissioned the preparation of a constitutional reform in 1948, which would adapt to his own form of government and which of course would allow immediate re-election. A constituent convention was held in 1949, which sanctioned the new text of the constitution on 11 March, taking the oath on the 16th of the same month.

The main objective of his first presidency was to obtain the economic and industrial independence of the country. Encouraged by the favourable international economic situation, he committed his administration to a vast programme of expenditures designed to transform the economy, extend health and social welfare benefits, and strengthen national defence. Perón's wife, Eva Duarte, did not settle for the passive role of the previous first ladies and participated actively in politics to such an extent that many people wondered 'who ruled whom.' She led a charity foundation bearing her name with funds obtained from a variety of private sources, and not always voluntarily. The State acquired companies of foreign capital, mainly American (the telephone company), French and English (the railway system). Of the 12 ministerial and secretariat positions, only four of them would be administered by the military, including the three armed service posts and the Ministry of Public Works. However, his first two presidencies were characterised by increasing political violence. The Peronists questioned the racist and classist coups and terrorist actions of the anti-Peronists, concretised in murders, massacres and coups d'état, while they questioned the police torture, arbitrary detentions, the violation of freedom of the press and expression and the political assassinations produced by the action or omission of the government. Among the acts of violence

General Perón, on the day of the presidential inauguration, in his uniform as a general of the Argentine Army and to his left, Vice-President Juan Hortensio Quijano. (Archivo General de la Nación)

President General Perón in his office at the Casa Rosada. (Archivo General de la Nación)

most questioned by the government were: the arrest and conviction of trade unionists; the resignation and layoff of a large number of university teachers; the arrest of the opposition; restrictions on freedom of expression and of the press; the burning of the central premises and library of the Socialist Party and other premises of non-Peronist parties and the Jockey Club; and the burning of churches on 16 June 1955, among many other events.

Regarding the press, there were severe restrictions on freedom of expression. An organisation called Alea S.A. was formed with the aim of acquiring the most important press media and thus neutralising any negative opinion towards the government. Thus, the Buenos Aires newspapers *Crítica, La Razón, Noticias Gráficas* and *La Época* were acquired. Only *La Prensa, La Nación* and *Clarín* remained as independent newspapers, but later the government expropriated *La Prensa* and *La Nueva Provincia.* In order to survive, *La Nación* and *Clarín* softened the criticism toward Perón and his government. The opposition had almost no access to the mass media unlike the ruling party, which could make unrestricted use of radios and newspapers to disseminate political propaganda.

For various reasons, Perón generated not only adherents but also numerous detractors and since 1946 anti-Peronist acts followed one another, the most important being the following:

- Perón's arrest and his assassination plan in October 1945
- the coup plan of February 1946
- the generalisation of public expressions of hatred and discrimination such as 'zoo flood', 'fats', 'little black heads', 'populist measles', 'long live cancer!'– the latter when Eva Perón was dying of that disease
- the creation of terrorist civil commandos
- the coup of 28 September 1951
- the terrorist attack of 15 April 1953 in Plaza de Mayo
- the bombing and machine-gunning of Plaza de Mayo on 16 June 1955, which caused more than 300 deaths and 700 were wounded
- the coup d'état of 16 September 1955 that overthrew Perón
- the humiliation, kidnapping and disappearance of the body of Eva Perón
- the 1956 shootings and murders of Peronists including several Army officers and civilians involved in an attempted coup
- the outlawing of Peronism carried out in 1956 and the thousands of arrests and layoffs of militants, artists, athletes, public employees and teachers sympathetic to Peronism
- the military intervention of the unions in 1956
- the repeal by military proclamation of the Constitution of 1949
- restrictions on freedom of expression and of the press
- the annulment of the 1962 elections
- the disappearance and cover-up of the murder of trade unionist Felipe Vallese in 1962
- the seizure of the plane in which Perón tried to return to Argentina in 1964 by the Brazilian military dictatorship at the request of the Argentine government of Arturo Illia
- the proscription of the Peronist Party between 1955 and 1972 and of Perón until 1973

The mutual hatred between Peronists and anti-Peronists would extend for many years.

3

THE FAILED COUP OF GENERAL BENJAMÍN MENÉNDEZ

In 1951, a conspiracy arose in the School of War, around the professor of military history, Colonel Pedro Eugenio Aramburu (later promoted to general). At his side were the director of the establishment, General Eneas Colombo, and four fellow professors: Colonel Juan Carlos Lorio and Lieutenant Colonels Bernardino Labayru, Luis Leguizamón Martínez and Emilio Bonnecarrere. Unexpectedly, Pedro Eugenio Aramburu was transferred to Rio de Janeiro as a military attaché, where he met the naval attaché, Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas. Thus devoid of their boss, Labayru and Lorio travelled to Córdoba and met with General Eduardo Lonardi, who accepted the commitment to lead them. The tentative date of the uprising, 15 July, was postponed due to a lack of sufficient revolutionary elements. So, the plot began to split. General Benjamín Menéndez had not agreed with Lonardi's choice and still had expectations of being the one to lead the coup.

The main objective of the coup was to cancel the national elections of November 1951, in order to prevent Perón from being re-elected. Seeing a favourable political moment, Menéndez gave the order to unleash the coup on 28 September and Lonardi, who had asked for his retirement, which was immediately accepted, decided not to adhere to the uprising but released his followers, some of whom supported the insurrection. In the early morning of that day, Menéndez and his staff entered Campo de Mayo, a large Army installation in the province of Buenos Aires, where there were already rebel units. The epicentre of the uprising took place there and the objective was to make an attack against the Head of State General Perón, the Minister of Defence General Humberto Sosa Molina and the Minister of the Army General Franklin Lucero during a ceremony that would take place in Sargento Cabral Army NCO School in Campo de Mayo. Once they arrived, they would be captured and executed immediately.

The then-Captain Alejandro Agustín Lanusse, (who later as an Army lieutenant general became the de facto president of Argentina between 26 March 1971 and 25 May 1973), with troops from the Campo de Mayo Riding School, seized gate number eight, and General Benjamín Menéndez and his staff entered through it. Then the chief of the Tank Regiment C.8, Lieutenant Colonel Raúl Darío Carenzo arrived, who received the support of the non-commissioned officers. He informed the Minister of the Army, General Lucero, that indeed the officers of the Riding School and the cavalry were inciting their comrades to bow to the revolution. Meanwhile, there was a shooting in the tank regiment that caused the only death of this uprising, Corporal Miguel Farina, who had tried to oppose it. Officers from Campo de Mayo began preparing the Sherman tanks. Of the 30 tanks, they were only able to mobilise seven, probably due to sabotage by the non-commissioned officers, but before reaching the exit, another five were damaged and had to be abandoned, so that ultimately the coup column left under the command of General Menéndez with two (other sources mentioned three) Sherman tanks, three armoured units and nearly 300 cavalry troops. The rebel officers did not have the support of the majority of the NCOs who remained loyal to the government. Around 9:00 a.m., shooting began at the scene between rebel officers and NCOs, with several wounded on both sides.

On the 28th, early in the morning, the government learned of the uprising led by Generals Benjamín Menéndez and Arturo Rawson. Immediately, General Lucero issued orders to quell the coup attempt. The coup forces had only the support of a squadron from the Cavalry School and the First Motorised Division of La Tablada, the El Palomar Air Base, which was taken by Brigadiers Samuel Guaycochea and Guillermo Ziny, and the Punta Indio Naval Air Base led by Captain Vicente Baroja. The rebel naval units counted on a number of armed North American AT-6 Texans at Punta Indio Naval Air Base, about whose contribution to this uprising very little is known. One action by a Navy Texan however is known. Two-armed Naval Aviation AT-6s, piloted by Captain Vicente Baroja and Corvette Lieutenant Siro de Martini, took off from Punta Indio, heading for Buenos Aires, with the mission of preventing General Perón from fleeing. Upon reaching the Federal Capital Airport, at that time called *Aeroparque 17 de Octubre,* they saw an Air Force De Havilland D.H. 104 Dove trying to take off and, believing that President Perón was on board, they attacked it. Both Texans fired

Some prominent leaders of the 1951 uprising. From the left: General Benjamin Menéndez, Brigadier Guillermo Zinny and Major Julio Rodolfo Alsogaray. (Archivo General de la Nación)

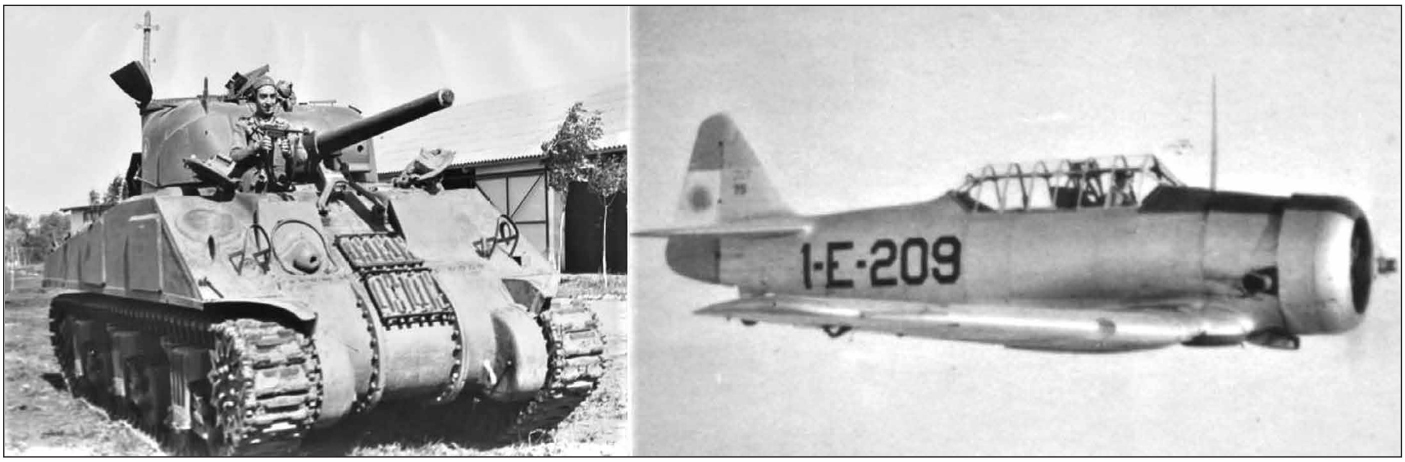
Two key military figures in Perón's government: General Franklin Lucero, the Minister of the Army (left) and General Humberto Sosa Molina, Minister of Defense (right). (Open source)

at the Dove's empennage to prevent it from taking off, but its pilot, Commodore Lapuente, was able to do so anyway and then he evaded the attackers by flying low between the buildings in the Belgrano neighbourhood.

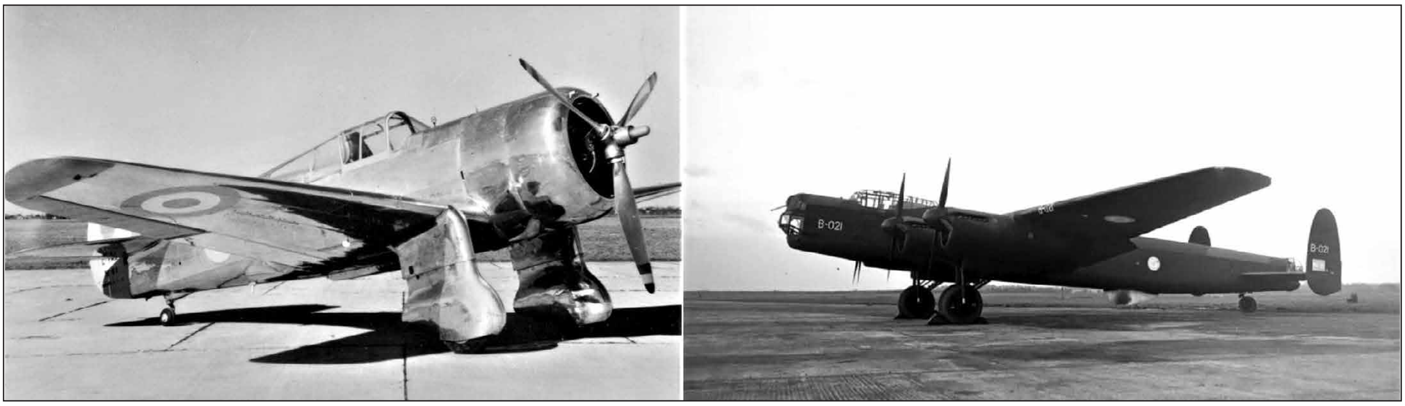
Most of the Argentine Air Force units remained loyal to the government and in fact, some Avro Lincoln B.Mk 1 heavy bombers were used against the Naval Aviation installations, bombing the main runway at Punta Indio. On the other hand, 14 rebel aircraft, Curtiss Hawk 75-0 fighters under the command of Vice Commodore Jorge Rojas Silveyra and I.Aé. 24 Calquín light bombers led by Commander Luis Roberto Albornoz, departed from the Mendoza Air Garrison, with an unknown destination, but to support the uprising. Apparently, the Hawks returned to their base but some Calquíns proceed to Punta Indio, where they landed. Also, some Fiat G.55 fighters of the *Grupo 2 de Caza* (Fighter Group Number 2) based at Mendoza took off and went to Punta Indio Naval Air Base to support the Navy. They were supposed to be refuelled, armed and launched in support of the counter-government operations. Once they landed, all the pilots were arrested and the fighters were immobilised together with the Calquíns that had previously landed. At 1:00 p.m., one of the Calquíns, crewed by Second Lieutenant Marcos Carrión as pilot and the mechanic Corporal Ramón Alberto Rodríguez, returned to its base. The details of the intervention of these aircraft in this uprising are not known, but it is presumed that their original destination was the Villa Reynolds Air Base. In any case, they all returned to Mendoza between 29th and 30 September, without actually taking any offensive action against the government. Some of the pilots involved in the coup attempt later took off from El Palomar and flew into exile to Uruguay.

At that time, the Argentine Air Force Order of Battle was as follows:

- *Grupo 1 de Bombardeo* (Bombardment Group Number 1), at Coronel Pringles AFB, Villa Reynolds, San Luis, with 25 Avro Lincoln B.Mk 2 and five Martin Model 139WAA bombers
- *Grupo 2 de Bombardeo* (Bombardment Group Number 2), also at Coronel Pringles AFB, Villa Reynolds, San Luis, with 15 Avro Lancaster B.Mk 1 bombers
- *Grupo 1 de Caza* (Fighter Group Number 1), at El Plumerillo AFB, Mendoza, with 39 Fiat G.55 and 21 Curtiss Hawk 75-0 fighters



An Argentine Army Sherman tank at Campo de Mayo in 1951 (left). A Naval Aviation North American AT-6A Texan in the early 1950s. (right) (Archivo General de la Nación/Aviación Naval Argentina)



An Argentine Air Force Curtiss Hawk 75-O fighter (left) and an Avro Lincoln B.Mk 1 heavy bomber (right). (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

- *Grupo 2 & 3 de Caza* (Fighter Groups Numbers 2 and 3), at Tandil AFB, with 46 Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4 (with 54 in reserve) interceptor jet fighters
- *Grupo 1 de Ataque* (Attack Grupo Number 1), at El Plumerillo AFB, Mendoza, with 16 Northrop/Douglas 8A-2 and FMA I.Ae.24 Calquín attack aircraft
- *Grupo 1 de Observación* (Observation Group Number 1), at General Urquiza AFB, Paraná, with 32 FMA I.Ae. DL-22 and four Beechcraft AT-11
- *Grupo 2 de Ataque* (Attack Group Number 2), at Reconquista AFB, with 20 FMA I.Ae.24 Calquín, 15 Fiat G-46-2B and four Beech AT-11 attack aircraft
- *Grupo 1 de Transporte* (Transport Group Number 1), at El Palomar AFB, Prov. Buenos Aires, with nine Junkers Ju.52/3m, six Vickers 615 Viking I, one Lockheed 10-E, one Lockheed 12-A, three Beech AT-11, 12 Douglas DC-3/C-47, 10 De Havilland DH-104 Dove I, seven Bristol Type 170, 10 Focke Wulf Fw.44J and 10 Airspeed AS.65 Consul
- *Grupo 2 de Transporte* (Transport Group Number 2), at Morón AFB, Prov. Buenos Aires, with three Junkers Ju.52 3/m, four Beech AT-11, five Douglas DC-4/C-54, 10 Douglas DC-3/C-47, 60 De Havilland DH-104 Dove I and five Vickers 615 Viking I

In their brief proclamation, the rebels accused the government of having led the nation to ‘a total bankruptcy of its internal and external credit, both morally and spiritually as well as materially.’[1] Restrictions on civic freedoms and the action of opponents, the constitutional reform that allowed the re-election of the president, as well as the politicisation measures of the armed forces, all seem to have influenced the military adhering to the movement. Disgruntled sections of the armed forces entered a deliberative state to remove the government and sought a leader for the rebellion. Those who could assume this role were General Eduardo Lonardi, the only high-ranking officer with command of troops not loyal to Perón, who was the commander of the First Army Corps, and General Benjamín Menéndez, retired since 1942; but they could not agree on a common action due to their personal dignity, pride, and ambition.

Starting at 7:30 a.m., General Lucero issued orders to various military units loyal to the government to counter the rebel forces. The loyalist forces included the A.1 Tank Regiment, the Army Service School, the Armoured Sapper Battalion, the Armoured Sharpshooter Regiment,[2] the Infantry School and the Army Communications School. Having taken all the pertinent measures, the first objective was to prevent the rebel forces from advancing towards the federal capital. Also joining the loyalist forces were the troops from the Army Mechanics School and the cadets from the Military School and the Military Lyceum. The government also mobilised the General Labour Confederation (CGT) whose members had to block access to the city of Buenos Aires with trucks, tractors and buses, to prevent the advance of the rebel tanks.

General Menéndez did not obtain the expected support of the Military School and the mechanised infantry detachment of La Tablada that had also rebelled but surrendered without fighting against loyal troops, so Menéndez, along with some of his officers, gave up and were detained. On the other hand, the naval air squadron and the Punta Indio military base, which had risen up, upon learning that they lacked ground forces, gave up their action and some of the interveners were arrested and others escaped.

By 3:00 p.m. it was all over, with the rebel forces largely outnumbered by forces loyal to the government. In addition to General Menéndez, Colonel Busetti, Commander Llosa of the Argentine Air Force, Majors Repetto, Reimúndez and Costa Paz, Captains Tesón, De Elía and Marzullo, and Lieutenants Olguín and Díaz Hamilton were detained at the Military School. They were immediately brought to justice, but some of the rebel leaders escaped by plane from both El Palomar and Punta Indio, heading into exile in Uruguay. They would return to Argentina only after the September 1955 coup.

Menéndez was sentenced to 15 years in prison and other officers received sentences of up to six years in prison. Some official newspapers and politicians clamoured for harsher penalties – including the death penalty – but Perón did nothing about it. A total of 111 officers from the Army, Navy and Air Force received jail sentences and another 66 who could not be detained for trial, either because they had fled the country or gone into hiding, were discharged. Others received administrative sanctions; the total number of officers whose military careers were cut was around 200. Perón took the opportunity to purge the armed forces, by retiring officers who had nothing to do with the rebellion, as was the case of three major generals, nine brigadier generals and eight admirals.

This attempted coup demonstrated that the Army was not homogeneous in its loyalty to the President. One consequence of General Menéndez’s failed coup was Law Number 14,063, which gave the president extraordinary powers to restructure the armed forces and expedite the removal and retirement of military personnel, especially those who did not deserve full political trust.

4

THE FAILED COUP OF 1952, GENERAL ELECTIONS AND THE DEATH OF THE FIRST LADY

When Perón announced his intention to run again for the presidency, he wanted to nominate his own wife, Eva Duarte de Perón, as a candidate for the vice presidency. The leadership of the CGT and the working masses demanded that the presidential duo for 1952 be made up of the Perón couple, but almost immediately there were many voices against this nomination within the armed forces, and Evita's health was inexorably deteriorating, which is why she herself resigned her candidacy. Vice-President Hortensio Quijano was asked again to accept the candidacy for the next vice-presidential term 1952–1958, which he reluctantly did, since he too was ill and, in fact, would die in office later. However, Eva Perón's resignation from her nomination for vice-president failed to calm several military officers who were at odds with the government.

On 6 November 1951, the former Army Colonel José Francisco Suárez was released, and he prepared a conspiracy together with some 50 officers to take the presidential residence, killing President Perón and his wife. Suárez's plan was the first to envisage the collaboration of columns of armed civilians, who would later be called 'Civil Commandos': they would be in charge of the arrest of the main government ministers, while the professional military would occupy Government House and the Communications Secretariat. On 10 January 1952, the 'demobilisation' of civilians was ordered until further notice. The authorities learned about this plan in advance and on 3 February, the day the attack on the presidential house should have been carried out, all the conspirators were arrested. The coup was dismantled as a result of an infiltration by the Aeronautical Information Service (SIA) that caused the conspirators to all be captured. Despite torture, they did not expose their companions and incredibly around 50 anti-Peronist officers remained in active duty in the armed forces.

Argentina's presidential elections of 1951 were held on 11 November to elect the candidates who would be president and vice-president of the nation during the period 1952–1958. They were the first elections in which women were able to exercise their newly acquired right to vote, and they were also the first elections in which all citizens of the country had the right to vote directly for the President of the Nation. The election was held under the constitutional text resulting from the 1949 reform that established the direct vote and the possibility of re-election of the president.

Juan Domingo Perón triumphed and was re-elected with 63.51 percent of the vote as the candidate of the Peronist and Peronist Feminine parties. As vice-president, Juan Hortensio Quijano

The day of the second presidential inauguration of General Perón, here accompanied by his wife Eva Duarte, who was already terminally ill and could barely stand. (Archivo General de la Nación)

There was massive participation of the people in the funeral of the First Lady, Eva Perón, which lasted 16 days. The top photograph shows President Perón with his ministers in front of the coffin. The lower photograph shows the gun carriage carrying Eva Perón's coffin, driven by a group of workers dressed in white shirts, on 11 August 1952. Behind was Perón, Evita's mother and brothers. (Archivo General de la Nación).

was elected. Ricardo Balbín of the UCR obtained second place with 32.22 percent of the vote, Reynaldo Pastor of the National Democratic Party (PDN) the third place with 2.33 percent of the vote and Rodolfo José Ghioldi of the Argentine Communist Party (PCA) in last place with only 0.95 percent of the vote.

Meanwhile, the First Lady's health was deteriorating more and more. She stayed in bed most of the day and one of her last public appearances was on 1 May 1952, when she gave a speech to the workers; this would be the last speech of her life. On the day of the presidential inauguration, 4 June, she made her final public appearance when she accompanied her husband in all the acts of that day.

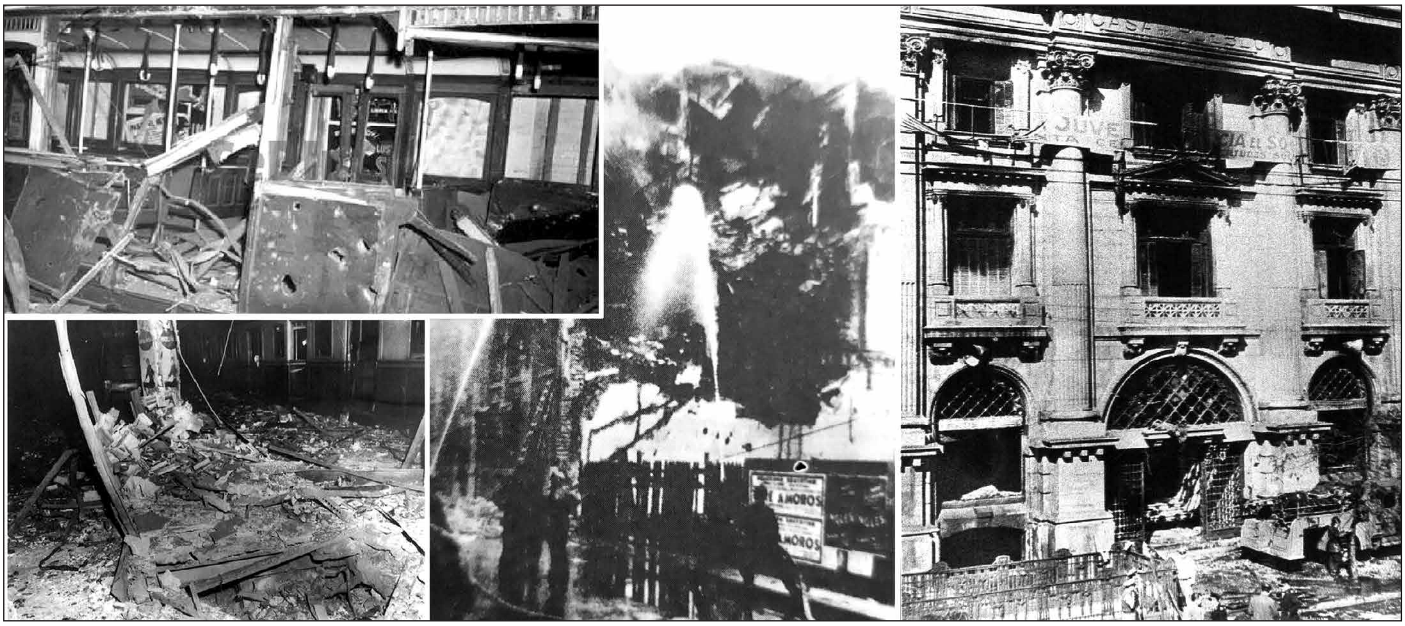
On 26 July at 8:23 p.m., the first lady Eva Perón, who was 33 years old, died. Her body was embalmed in order to be preserved, and was exposed in the central premises of the CGT building. Her funeral was massive, attended by hundreds of thousands of Perón's followers. This tragic event produced a crisis in Perón, who suffered a mood decay noticed by those close to him. He decided to take certain measures that worsened the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Peronist government, which deteriorated over time. During this period, the irritation of groups that until then had supported the government converged with that of the opposition, which considered Peronism a type of populism based on the social resentment of the popular classes against what it generically called 'the oligarchy,' which included the Argentine upper-middle and upper classes, attributing to them a position that promoted social inequality.

5

A TERRORIST ATTACK AND THE PLAN TO BOMB PLAZA DE MAYO

On 15 April 1953 there was a terrorist attack that consisted of the detonation of two bombs while a union event organised by the CGT was taking place in the Plaza de Mayo (in front of Government House). It was an anti-Peronist who placed the bombs in the Plaza de Mayo subway station. As a result, six people died and more than 90 were injured, including 19 being mutilated. This was considered by some to be a first trial of the subsequent bombing of the Plaza de Mayo in 1955 and the September Revolution. The terrorists had also planted bombs on the roof of the *Banco de la Nación* building, with the intention that the masonry would collapse on the crowds gathered nearby. Fortunately, these bombs – which would have caused a much greater number of victims – did not detonate.

It was believed that the attack was a reaction to the measures taken by the government against agriculture and speculators.



Extreme violence in Buenos Aires in April 1953. Bombings in a subway train station (left), fire in the Jockey Club (centre) and at the headquarters of the Socialist Party (right). (Open source)

The terrorist group was made up of the radical politicians Roque Carranza, Carlos Alberto González Dogliotti, and the brothers Alberto and Ernesto Lanusse, supported by Captain Eduardo Thölke, who provided them with the explosives. This was a group of young people, regular UCR activists, who had been trained in handling weapons and explosives, and had already tried to kill Perón on one of his trips. Most of them belonged to well-off traditional families. The federal police carried out an extensive investigation that resulted in the arrest of engineer Roque Guillermo Carranza as the main perpetrator of the incident. Others implicated were also arrested. Through journalistic investigations it was learned that it had been a civilian group of young freemasons and unionist radicals. With the arrest of those involved, a plan to attack Government House which had been planned for Wednesday 13 May during a regular cabinet meeting, was derailed.

In response to the attack on the Plaza de Mayo, groups of Peronist militants and protesters set fires at the headquarters of Peronist opposition, the Democratic, Radical and Socialist Parties. At the Socialist Party headquarters, the fire spread to the *Casa del Pueblo* (House of the People), which caused the destruction of the Juan B. Justo Workers' Library, where there were archives of the history of the Argentine labour movement. The firefighters limited themselves to preventing the fire from spreading to the neighbouring buildings and the police officers present in the attacked places refrained from intervening, except for the arrest and subsequent release of the people who sought to put out the fire by their own means. Likewise, an attack was made against the Jockey Club of Buenos Aires, a space attributed to the Argentine oligarchic sectors. This attack consisted of a fire that caused the loss of a large part of its entire artistic heritage. No deaths or injuries were recorded in these events. There were similar attempts at the Petit Café on the corner of Santa Fé Street and Callao Street, which was supposed to be an opposition stronghold, and at the newspaper *La Nación*, but in both cases the police failed to arrest the attackers.

After the attack the government implemented a state of siege, and in the following days the actions to discover and arrest the terrorists who committed the attack multiplied. The police arrested several leaders of the political opposition and dozens of activists who were placed at the disposal of the Executive Branch without the obligation to initiate any legal process, as indicated by the constitutional norm of the state of siege. Among those arrested were Ricardo Balbín, Arturo Frondizi, Federico Pinedo, Alfredo Palacios, and Nicolás Repetto.

After the 1953 attack, the conspiracy was reactivated and several plans were even elaborated within the Navy under the guise of military exercises that were intended to prepare for a future coup, in which the Puerto Belgrano Naval Base and the Sea Fleet participated in particular.

The support of the Catholic hierarchy was decisive. The San José de Córdoba Catholic School had become a weapons depot, and Molotov cocktails were stored in the priests' bedrooms and in the basements of the major seminary, and shooting exercises were held with rifles.

In 1953, the naval commander Jorge Alfredo Bassi embarked on a routine instructional trip of the Sea Fleet, during which he had the idea of attacking the Casa Rosada in the same way that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. Through mutual friends he asked General Eduardo Lonardi again for his help to get elements of the Army to join the revolt. Lonardi, when he heard about the plan to assassinate Perón by bombing the Plaza de Mayo, said he disliked the idea and had no desire to participate.

Shortly after, a plan was devised to capture the President on a naval ship, where the entire presidential cabinet would be meeting to commemorate Independence Day. Bassi met again with Lonardi, but the General, after interviewing some other people, concluded that the plan was based on too small a group, without sufficient elements to carry it out successfully. For this reason, he decided to revoke his participation. This cut him off from his contacts in the Navy. The objective of the bombardment was to copy the Japanese attack strategy on the US Naval base at Pearl Harbor and was to kill Perón and his entire cabinet. Although there were easier ways to commit this assassination (for example, Perón would leave the presidential residence at exactly 5:45 a.m. every day driving his own unarmoured Cadillac car, accompanied by another car with guards) it was sought to do so in such a spectacular way that it would take away the will to fight from his millions of followers.

6

CONFRONTATION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Although Peronism and the Catholic Church got along relatively well for a time, a series of events slowly separated them. In the area of charity, very traditional within the Catholic Church, they began to compete with the Eva Perón Foundation and the government withdrew state subsidies to Catholic charitable organisations. The ecclesiastical preoccupation centred on the progress of the State in areas that the Catholic Church considered to be of its particular concern: education, family, intermediate organisations, social assistance; these were areas that were also considered key to the project to Catholicise society.

President Perón and Monsignor Santiago Copello, critic of the government. After the tensions between the Church and Peronism, he spent his last years in the Roman Curia. (Archivo General de la Nación)

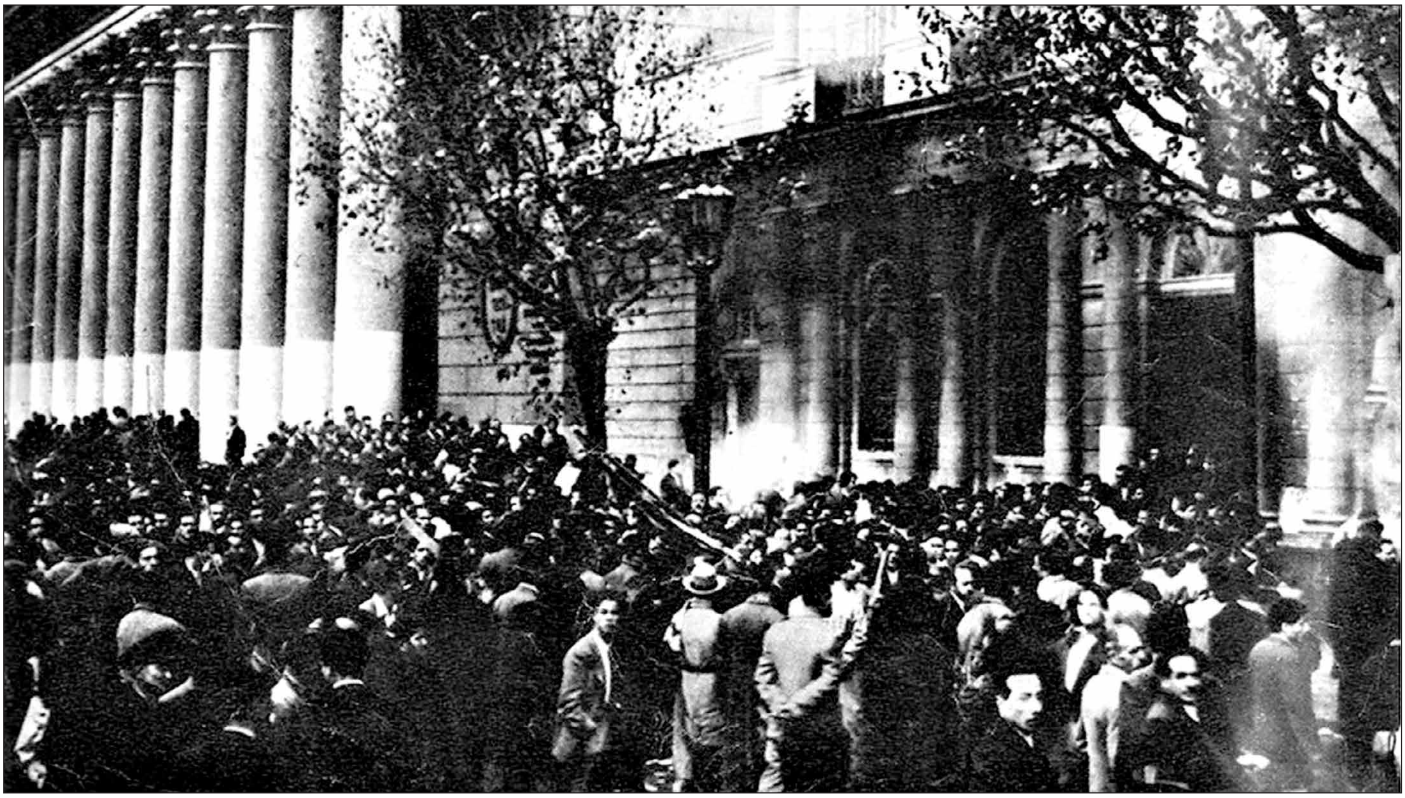
On 24 September 1954, an editorial in the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Córdoba, *Los Principios* (The Principles), argued in relation to the Peronist project that declared the equality of legitimate and illegitimate children (born out of marriage): '*The law projected in our country goes against the family, against its organisation, against its very spirit.*' On the other hand, President Perón severely criticised the attitude of some bishops of the Catholic Church, calling them 'anti-Argentines', clarifying that it was not the Catholic Church that was against him, but a tiny group of 15 to 20 priests and bishops.

At the end of 1954, a complex escalation of confrontations between the Government and the Catholic Church began, which until that year had actively supported Peronism. Based on relatively modest opposition gestures on the part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the government reacted by sanctioning Law Number 14,394, whose Article 31 included divorce. Shortly after, the Municipality of Buenos Aires, then directly controlled by the President, prohibited merchants from displaying nativity scenes or other religious figures in commemoration of Christmas. In an escalation of a few months, the government abolished the non-working day characteristic of certain Catholic religious holidays, allowed the opening of establishments to practice prostitution, prohibited religious demonstrations in public places, eliminated tax exemptions to the Church, and suppressed religious instruction from public schools. The captive pro-government Press began to harshly criticise prelates of the Catholic Church with serious accusations and grievances.

Perón´s decision to confront the Catholic Church was a huge mistake since it united almost all his political enemies, and even many Peronist military officers would not tolerate the actions against Catholics. The stage was being set for an uprising against the government. And it was at that time that the slogan 'Christ or Perón' appeared, which later the revolutionaries would adopt in the form of 'Christ Beats' (*Cristo Vence*).

In mid-May 1955, large groups of *Acción Católica* (Catholic Action) began to meet clandestinely to organise subversive cells. The

Monsignors Manuel Tato and Ramón Novoa, in Rome, after being expelled by the Peronist government. (Open source)



The Curia and Archiepiscopal Palace, next to the Cathedral of Buenos Aires, set on fire by the Peronist mobs. (Open source)

Catholic hierarchy formed a University Federation parallel to the official one in Córdoba where priests Enrique Angelelli and Quinto Cargnelutti, together with Catholic Action and other organisations, established the Catholic Youth Movement. The government, besides approving the divorce law and the legalisation of prostitution, dissolved the National Directorate of Religious Education which caused great tension between the authorities and the Catholic Church. The Argentine Catholic Action was also responsible for the publication and distribution of pamphlets with information that the state-controlled press did not disseminate, such as the editorial in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, which denounced religious persecution in Argentina.

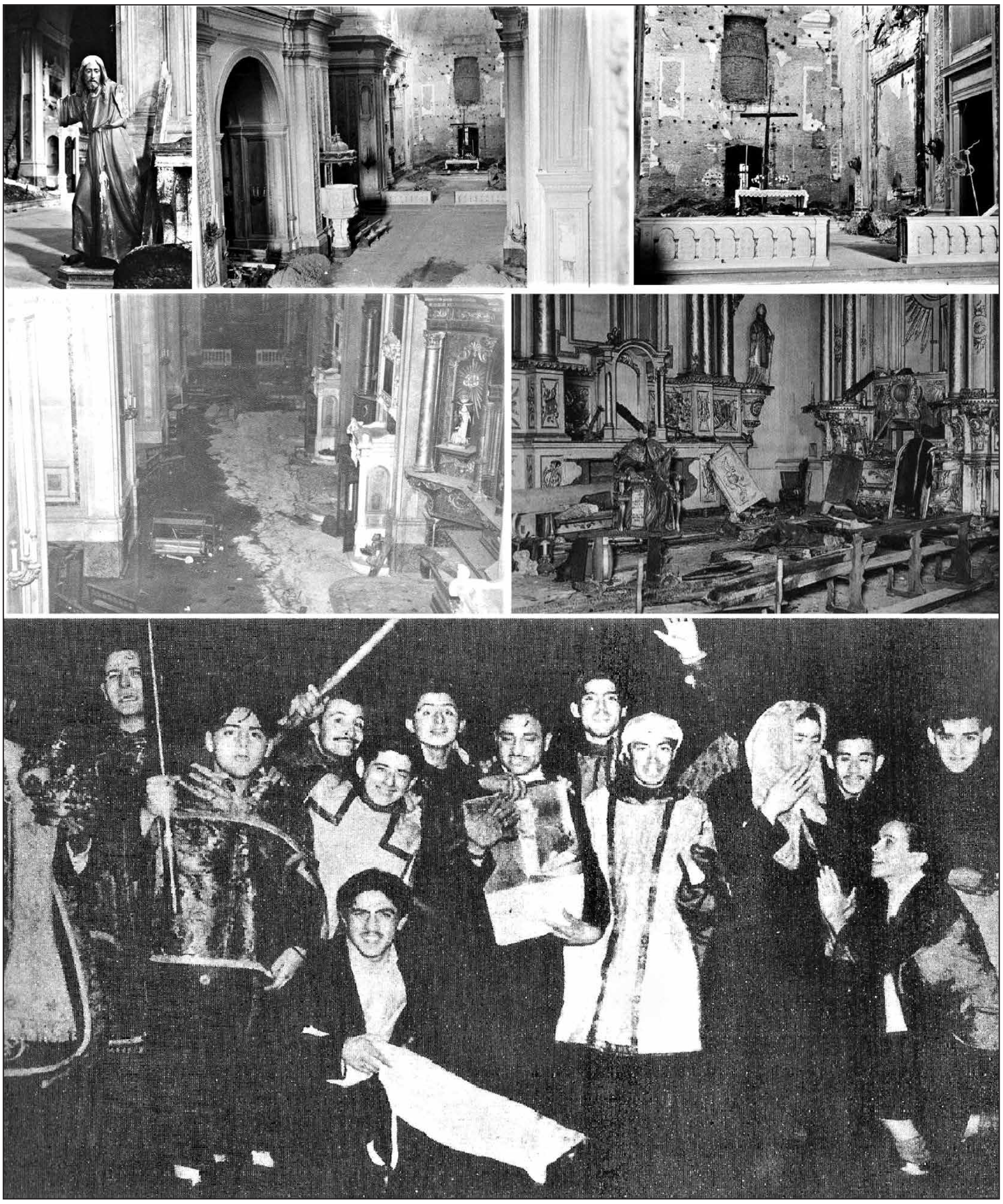
In the days before 16 June 1955, the tension between the Government and the Catholic Church intensified. Despite the government's ban on holding religious processions in the streets, the Catholic hierarchy summoned parishioners for the *Corpus Christi* procession, initially for Thursday 9 June but then postponed to Saturday 11 June, to allow more of the public to participate. A huge number of people were present for this event, estimated at between 100,000 to 250,000, which started from the Cathedral of Buenos Aires and dissolved upon arrival at the congress. In that place, police officers in civilian clothing, acting according to directives given by their superiors, lowered the national flag and then set it on fire, raising the Vatican flag in its place, a premeditated action with which to blame the protesters. As a result, the government organised an act of 'reparation to the national flag' for 16 June, for which the Minister of Aeronautics, Brigadier Mayor Juan Ignacio de San Martín, ordered that a formation of Gloster Meteor F.4 interceptor jet fighters would fly over the cathedral, where the remains of the Liberator General José de San Martín rested.

In this climate of tension, the government decided to expel two Argentine prelates from the curia of Buenos Aires, Monsignors Manuel Tato and Ramón Pablo Novoa, under the accusation of having been the instigators of the rebellion. They left the country on the day of the attack on Plaza de Mayo. The Vatican response to this situation came directly from Pope Pius XII through the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, who ordered by decree the excommunication of all members of the Argentine government responsible for ordering and carrying out the expulsion of the Catholic prelates, but without mentioning any names. This news was not published by the Argentine press but was widely disseminated in the international press and through pamphlets among Argentine Catholics.

Peronist militants attacked the Cathedral of Buenos Aires but could not achieve their purpose of vandalising it because hundreds of Catholics, who were inside, prevented it. The police later arrested more than 300 Catholics, but this was only a pause because the attack on Catholic churches would come a few days later when the coup attempt failed.

The attack on the Catholic churches was not, as many might think, a spontaneous act of the Peronist mob, but had been deliberately planned months before in the event of a coup against Perón. The original plan was only to attack the Catholic churches, not the nearby Orthodox and Coptic churches.

So, in retaliation for the support given by the Catholic Church to the coup plotters and opponents of the Perón government, during the afternoon on 16 June, before the street fighting around the Ministry of the Navy building ended, the first assault took place. It was led by Peronists civil commandos on the Archiepiscopal Palace, the Curia, a sort of a local version of the infamous 1938 Nazi *Kristallnacht*. No one doubted that the Peronists' first target of attack would be precisely the Catholic Church. The rest of the attacks on Church buildings occurred after six in the evening. Presumably President Perón, upon witnessing the vandalism, ordered the Buenos Aires police chief, Commissioner General Miguel Gamboa, to take care of the security of the churches, but he, following instructions from the Minister of the Interior, Ángel Borlenghi, kept all police officers quartered at their stations, thus allowing numerous acts of vandalism to be carried out in the city with absolute impunity. The passive attitude of the federal police and firefighters allowed



Images of vandalism in various churches in Buenos Aires. In the photo below, some Peronist looters commit sacrilegious acts while dressed in priestly garments. (Open source)

the arson groups to continue their attacks. In fact, the heads of the different fire companies received orders to 'let the churches burn' and 'to prevent only the spread of the fire to neighbouring houses,' with the perverse purpose of causing more damage to the temples.[1] As in any street disturbance, the Peronist mobs were spontaneously joined by professional criminals, who during the attacks on the churches dedicated themselves to stealing relics, jewellery or any cash that they could find.

The attackers avoided burning the Cathedral of Buenos Aires due to the fact that the remains of one of the greatest Argentine heroes, General José de San Martín, rested there. Instead, the Curia and the Archiepiscopal Palace were attacked around 4:30 p.m. The entire building was burned, which was a huge architectural loss. The Historical Archive was burned, containing birth, marriage and death certificates dating back to the end of the sixteenth century. Numerous works of ancient art were also burned: ceramics, carvings, metalwork, oil paintings, and so on. Then, the arsonist group neatly divided into two columns; one marched south, towards the Santo Domingo convent, and another went north in search of the Basilica of La Merced. Although the site located in the corner of Belgrano Street and Defensa Street was acquired by the Dominican Order in 1606, the building was built between 1762 and 1779. Fray Luis Alberto Montes de Oca, prior of the convent, observed the trucks of militants that congregated nearby and ordered the gates to be closed to prevent their entry. At around 5:30 p.m., he saw the bars begin to be forced, and he left the place through a side door. He went to a nearby police station for help but left no one in defence of the church.

A similar situation happened in the convent of San Francisco, built between 1731 and 1754, and its annexed San Roque chapel, built between 1751 and 1762. The prior of that convent was Father Cecilio Heredia and, like Montes de Oca, he left the building through a side door in civilian clothes at the time when the first Peronist militants made their appearance. One block away was the church of San Ignacio de Loyola, which was the oldest building in the city. Although Governor Hernandarias had given the land in 1606 for the construction of an adobe church, the current brick building did not begin to rise until 1675. The parish priest, Father Alberto Lattauda, first tried to convince the attackers not to destroy anything, but one of them took him outside, so he decided to approach two Army trucks, requesting their intervention to prevent the acts of vandalism, but the troops refused. Certificates of baptisms and marriages for four centuries would be lost there.

Peronist gangs would attack other churches: Nuestra Señora de la Piedad del Monte Calvario, San Miguel Arcángel, Nuestra Señora de las Victorias, Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro, San Nicolás de Bari and San Juan Bautista, destroying altars, images, statues, benches, ecclesial clothing worn by priests, and stealing numerous relics, followed by setting fires with Molotov cocktails. Those who attacked the Church of Nuestra Señora de las Victorias hit Father Jakob Wagner, causing fractures to his legs and head. As a consequence of which, the octogenarian priest was hospitalised, being seriously injured, and although he would recover, he would eventually die from complications of his injuries a couple of months later.

The attack on the Catholic churches was not limited only to Buenos Aires, since several churches were also vandalised in the city of Bahía Blanca. In that city, a Peronist mob of at least 1,000 people launched into the burning, looting and desecration of several churches. The archives of the local curia were destroyed, the seat of the bishopric was stoned, the rectory of the Sagrado Corazón de María was totally destroyed, as was part of the church. The church of Santa Teresita del Niño Jesús and the cathedral of Nuestra Señora de la Merced suffered the same fate.

The final tally was that 16 churches had been attacked in Buenos Aires, one in Mar del Plata and three in Bahía Blanca. The damage to the buildings, but above all the cultural and religious heritage, made Perón's military victory in June a Pyrrhic one, and he would be given the coup de grace in September.

In the days that followed, both the Perón government and the 'friendly' press blamed communist vandals for the fires and the most incredible thing was that years later, the former president would even blame the Catholics themselves for burning their own churches to campaign against him. Only the Peronists believed it, while the opposition knew perfectly well that the attackers were Peronist mobs.

Perón tried to soften relations with the Catholic Church and his government approved a fund of 100 million pesos for the reconstruction of the churches destroyed by fire, but the Catholic hierarchy did not accept this, saying that any reconstruction would be carried out by the Catholics themselves. The sight of burned and destroyed churches fuelled hatred towards Peronism. Thousands of faithful Catholics would visit the burned churches daily, in stupefaction and pain, kneeling to pray in front of them. Many of Perón's own loyal military commanders, who were devoted Catholics, were deeply moved to see the destroyed churches and almost all of them would rise up against the President three months later.

The identity of those who made up the groups of attackers could not be determined, and their leaders were not identified. Only a few thieves caught stealing church relics were arrested and prosecuted.

7

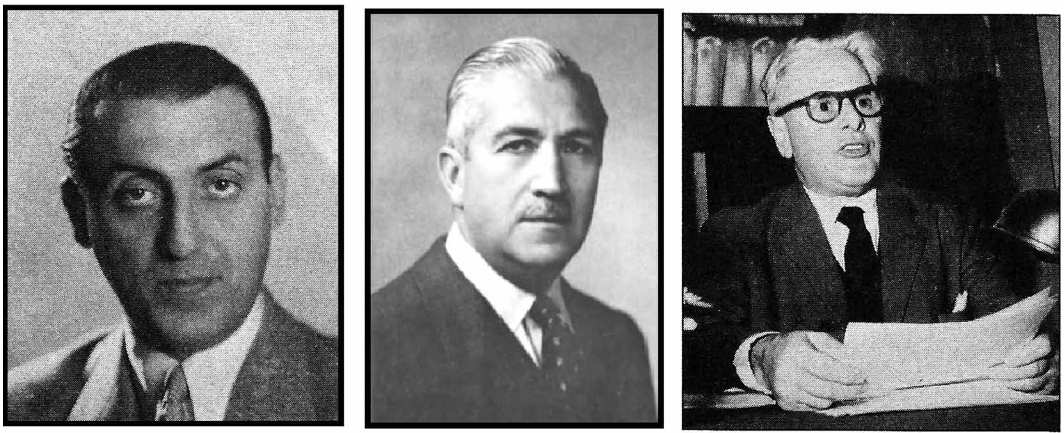
ANOTHER PLOT TO KILL PERÓN AND THE NAVAL CONSPIRACY

The next plot occurred in August 1954, organised by Raúl Lamuraglia, a businessman who had financed the Democratic Union campaign, which had faced Perón in the 1946 elections, through Bank of New York cheques that had been destined to support the National Committee of the Radical Civic Union and its candidates José P. Tamborini and Enrique Mosca. In 1951, the businessman had contributed resources to support General Menéndez's failed coup, which led him to prison. After being released, he marched to Uruguay. However, with the industrial promotion policies of Peronism, his fortune had expanded in a decade of economic growth. This allowed him to buy an old fighter plane in the United States, a light fighter-bomber that he took to Montevideo to carry out the mission of killing Perón and the bombing of the Plaza de Mayo. Crewed by a former naval aviator, Luis Baroja, the fighter-bomber would fly to Plaza de Mayo to machinegun the balcony where Perón would speak.

Lamuraglia frequently met with informants from the Colorado Party of Uruguay. Days before finalising the plan, he met secretly, in 1954, with President Batlle Berres and Argentine businessman Alberto Gainza Paz at his summer residence in Punta del Este, who offered him support for the assassination plan. Once again installed in Buenos Aires, the radical businessman Lamuraglia offered his villa in Bella Vista to organise the conspiracy and promised to finance a future coup. Nothing was carried out in the end, since the aircraft was in very bad condition and it was not armed, so the plan was aborted. The various sources consulted did not mention the type of aircraft, but it may have been an old Grumman TBF Avenger from the Second World War.

The state of tension between the government and not only the Catholic Church, but also a large number of retired military officers, middle-class and upper-class college students, and businessmen revived the group of naval officers who had previously conspired against the government: naval commanders Néstor Noriega (Chief of the Punta Indio Naval Air Base), Jorge Bassi (a naval aviator and commander of Air Naval Squadron Number 4 in Punta Indio), Antonio Rivolta (Chief of the Training Department of the Naval General Staff), Jorge Castiñeira Falcón (Chief of the Operations Department of the Naval General Staff) and Francisco Manrique. The latter's plan, to bomb Government House, still lacked the support of the Army. This was the main impediment about which they had to take immediate action.

In November 1954, Commanders Bassi and Manrique met at the estate of the wealthy industrialist Raúl Lamuraglia, in Bella Vista, together with Captain Bruzzone, the former Army Captain Walter Viader, Air Force Commander Agustín de la Vega, and Doctor Miguel Ángel Zavala Ortiz of the Radical Civic Union. Although they explored the possibility of summoning Generals Gibert, Aramburu and Anaya, the meetings did not have any concrete results. Lamuraglia established ties with the three most important



Political leaders of the opposition who, together with the Navy, conspired against Perón's government. From the left: Adolfo Vicchi, Miguel Ángel Zavala Ortíz and Américo Ghioldi. (Open source)

The main military leaders of the June 1955 uprising. Top row from left: Rear Admiral Aníbal Olivieri, Vice Admiral Samuel Toranzo C., Rear Admiral Benjamín Gargiulo, Commander Néstor Noriega and General León Bengoa. Bottom row from left: Commander Jorge Bassi, Commander Francisco Manrique, Commander Juan Carlos Argerich and Commander Antonio Rivolta. (Bombas sobre Buenos Aires-Daniel Cichero)

opposition parties and a civil triumvirate was appointed to assume power in case of success of the revolutionary plans: Zavala Ortiz for the Radicals, Ghioldi for the Socialists, and Adolfo Vicchi for the Conservatives.

In December 1954, the movement definitively incorporated the subversive group of civilians led by Walter Viader, but it had difficulty finding a leader until two officers from the Marine Corps joined: naval Commander Carlos Nielsen Enemark and Lieutenant Commander Fernando Suárez Rodríguez. They suggested Rear Admiral Samuel Toranzo Calderón, Chief of Staff of the Marine Infantry Command, who enthusiastically agreed to be the leader of the revolutionary group, and immediately met with Vicchi and Zavala Ortiz to confirm the direction of a possible government. After this, Toranzo Calderón sought the support of the anti-Peronist General Aramburu and Lieutenant Colonel Labayru, but they refused to participate. At the end of February 1955, a second group of civilians joined the conspiring sailors: they belonged to the circle led by doctors Mario Amadeo and Luis María de Pablo Pardo. Law student Jaime Mejía contacted General Justo León Bengoa, who commanded the III Infantry Division based in Paraná. Interviewed by Amadeo, General Bengoa was enthusiastic, but did not commit to the uprising.

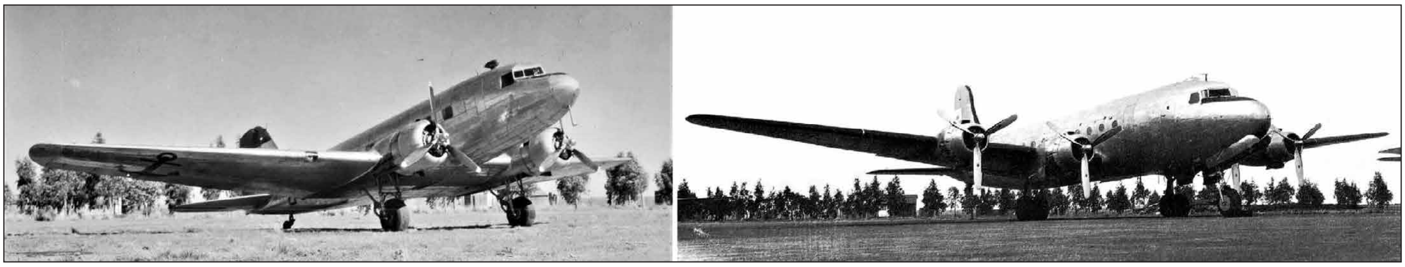
As for the Air Force, Commander Dardo Eugenio Ferreyra managed to engage the support of Captain Julio César Cáceres, 1st Lieutenant Carlos Torcuato de Alvear, and a few retired vice commodores and brigadiers. However, the interrogations of the Internal Information Service of the Air Force, alerted the conspirators of the suspicions that were raised against them, and they abandoned all contact with the sailors.

On Sunday, 23 April 1955, General Bengoa, who had travelled to Buenos Aires, met with Toranzo Calderón and promised him his support. From then on, several officers travelled regularly between Paraná and Buenos Aires to organise the preparations. A detailed study of the President's movements allowed the sailors to know that on Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. he used to meet with all his ministers at the Casa Rosada: during that time the highest level of government could be annihilated with a single attack. The 'hour 0' would be 10:00 a.m. in the morning: Toranzo Calderón would call the President, threatening him that to avoid bloodshed he must surrender within 15 minutes. The Rear Admiral had aircraft from the Punta Indio Naval Air Base, and about 700 members of the Marine Corps. The first lieutenants of the Air Force, Carlos Enrique Carús and Orlando Arrechea integrated many officers of the VII Air Brigade in Morón into the plot, who would also participate in the attack. Finally, several groups of civilians, identified by a white ribbon tied to their arms, would have the mission of neutralising the operations of the CGT, the Nationalist Liberation Alliance, and several radio stations. They considered that the coup could occur around 9 July.

At dawn on 10 June, Toranzo Calderón and Pablo Pardo left for the Litoral area in the car of the public notary Raúl Medina Muñoz. They did not set a date, rather, Bengoa promised to always be alert and mobilise all his troops as soon as the news of the rise of the Army was known. Many captains, impatient, incited Toranzo to attack as soon as possible. It was not known what the reaction the elements of the Army based in Buenos Aires would be, nor was it known what kind of support or opposition Toranzo's direct superior, Vice Admiral Benjamín Gargiulo, would give them. He was aware of the existence of a conspiratorial plot but gave no signs of wanting to interfere.

In the afternoon of 15 June, three Catalinas from the Naval Aviation, which had been armed with explosives and ammunition, took off from Bahía Blanca towards Punta Indio, with a forged order to supposedly carry out bombing exercises in the Bariloche area. This squadron was commanded by Lieutenant Commander Enrique García Mansilla, with Lieutenants René Buteler and Carlos Vélez. They landed without problems in Punta Indio and their war material was transferred to the DC-3 and DC-4 aircraft that would fly to Ezeiza International Airport. The airport manager, Vice Commodore Pérez Aquino, retired from active service due to his lack of adherence to the regime, was informed by Commander Jorge Bassi of the imminent coup and that Ezeiza would be used as one of the bases for the attack. The Vice Commodore did not put up any obstacles. There, Bassi had built a clandestine warehouse in a hangar for logistics for the Antarctic bases. Also, it was hoped to

The Canadian Vickers PBV-1A Canso A serial 0102/2-P-10 of Naval Air Squadron 2 of the Argentine Naval Aviation. (Nery Mendiburu via Michael Magnusson)



Douglas C-47 and DC-4 transport aircraft of the Naval Aviation used to transport war material and Marine infantry troops during the events of June 1955. (Histarmar files)

gather the Marine infantry troops from Mar del Plata, Azul and Puerto Belgrano there.

Rear Admiral Samuel Toranzo Calderón installed his command post in the building of the Ministry of the Navy, just 400 metres from the Casa Rosada, on the night of the 15th. It was there that he assigned Captain Juan Carlos Argerich to command the only available battalion of Marines, some 200 men. They were expected to make a rapid advance from the Navy Arsenal in the port towards Government House, which would begin three minutes after the end of the airstrike. In that area, they would also be supported by between 300 and 500 armed anti-Peronist civilians, who would be distinguished by wearing white armbands.

The fundamental element of the attack were the officers and planes of the Punta Indio Naval Air Base, commanded by Captain Néstor Noriega. There were already 20 North American AT-6s commanded by Lieutenant Commander Santiago Sabarots and five Beech AT-11 Kansans commanded by Lieutenant Commander Jorge Imaz, in addition to the three Catalinas commanded by Lieutenant Commander Enrique García Mansilla. All these aircraft were joined by another nine DC-3s and DC-4s for the transport of weapons and personnel.

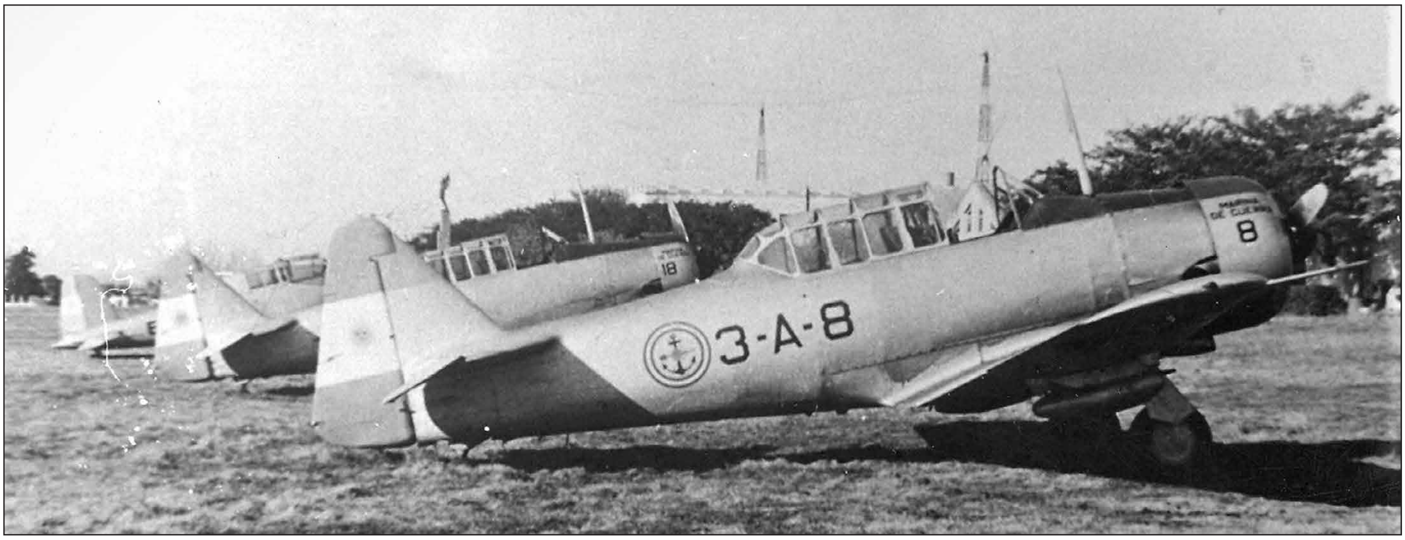
8

THE BOMBING RAID ON THE PLAZA DE MAYO

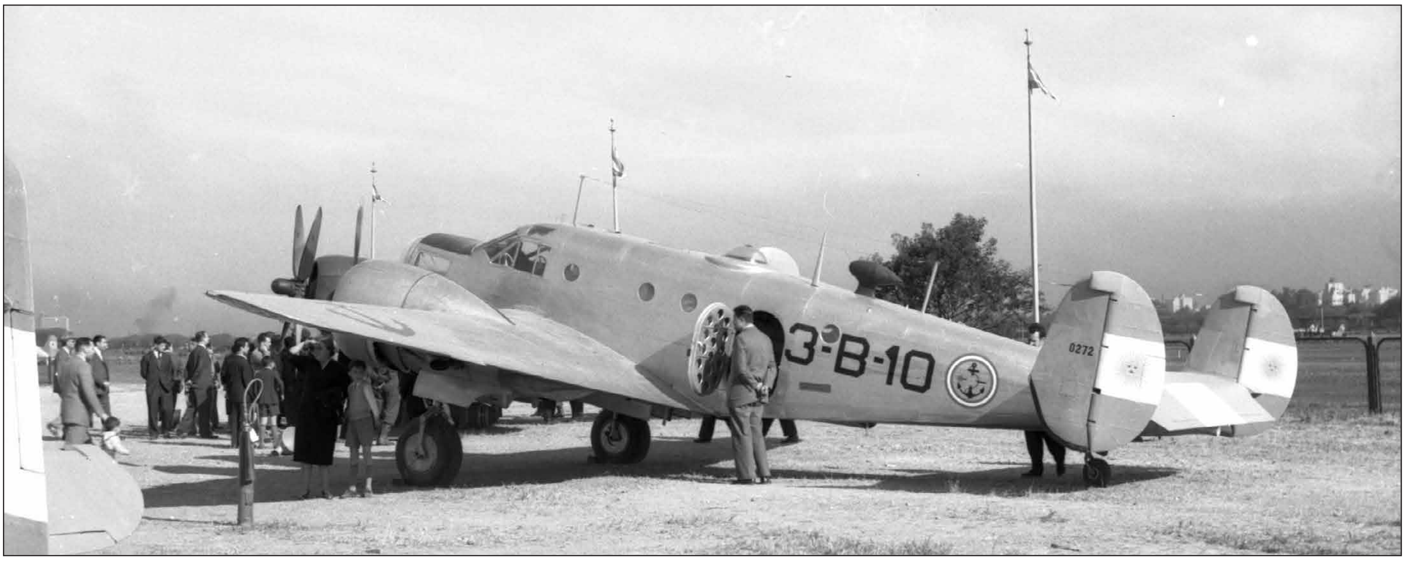
Thursday 16 June was cloudy and very cold. The rebel forces were under the command of Rear Admiral Samuel Toranzo Calderón and the uprising was executed by officers of the Navy and the Air Force. Several civilians participated in the revolt: the radical leader Miguel Ángel Zavala Ortiz, the conservative leader Adolfo Vicchi, the socialist leader Américo Ghioldi, the diplomat Luis María de Pablo Pardo and the Catholic nationalist militants Mariano Grondona, Carlos Burundarena, Santiago de Estrada, Rosendo Fraga, Felipe Yofré and Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo.

The plan consisted of taking advantage of an homage flight of reparation to the national flag that would take off at 8:00 a.m., using this to bomb Government House and the Ministry of War with the aim of eliminating Perón or at least causing a severe psychological blow against his presidency.

The units that would participate were aircraft from the Punta Indio Naval Air Base, other aircraft from the Argentine Air Force VII Air Brigade in Morón, some 700 members of the Marine Corps and various groups of armed civilians. In turn, Rear Admiral Samuel Toranzo Calderón informed his immediate superior, Vice Admiral Benjamín Gargiulo, of the plan, who joined the movement and at noon contacted the Minister of the Navy, Rear Admiral Aníbal Olivieri, but he described the plan as ‘crazy’. After all these events, the day before the attack, Olivieri suffered a medical event, a decompensation, and had to be admitted to the naval hospital due



Armed Naval Aviation North American Texans which participated in the bombing of Casa Rosada, seen at Boiso Lanza Airport in Uruguay after the failed coup of June 1955. (Nery Mendiburu via Michael Magnusson)



Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan, serial 0272/3-B-10, of the Naval Aviation. (via Vladimiro Cettolo)

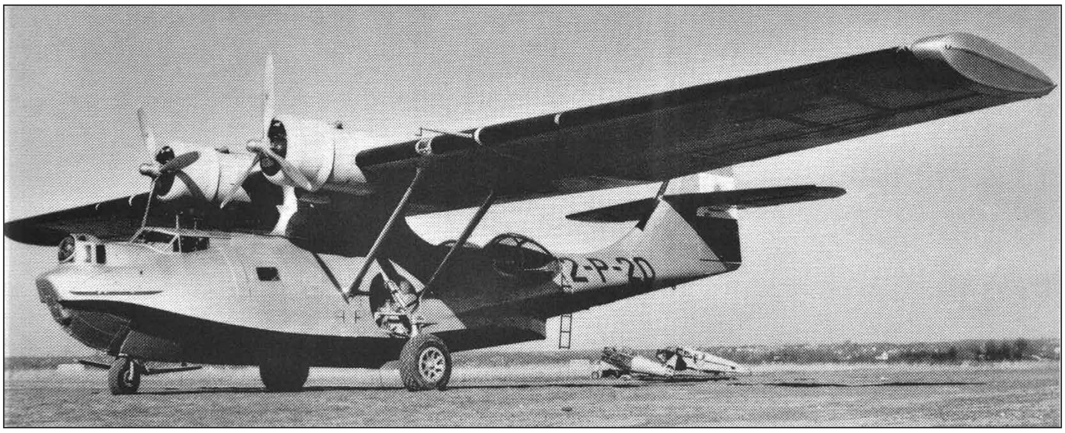
to the pressure he had suffered in the previous days, which he tried to mitigate with cigarettes, stimulant drugs and coffee. His condition was diagnosed as coronary ischemia, which was worsened due to lack of sleep. Olivieri was loyal to the government, but the latest measures taken against the Catholic Church, as he was a fervent Catholic, made him suffer a deep conflict that ended with the aforementioned critical clinical condition.

The cockpit and bomb bay of a Beechcraft AT-11, currently preserved in the National Aeronautical Museum in Morón. (Vladimiro Cettolo).

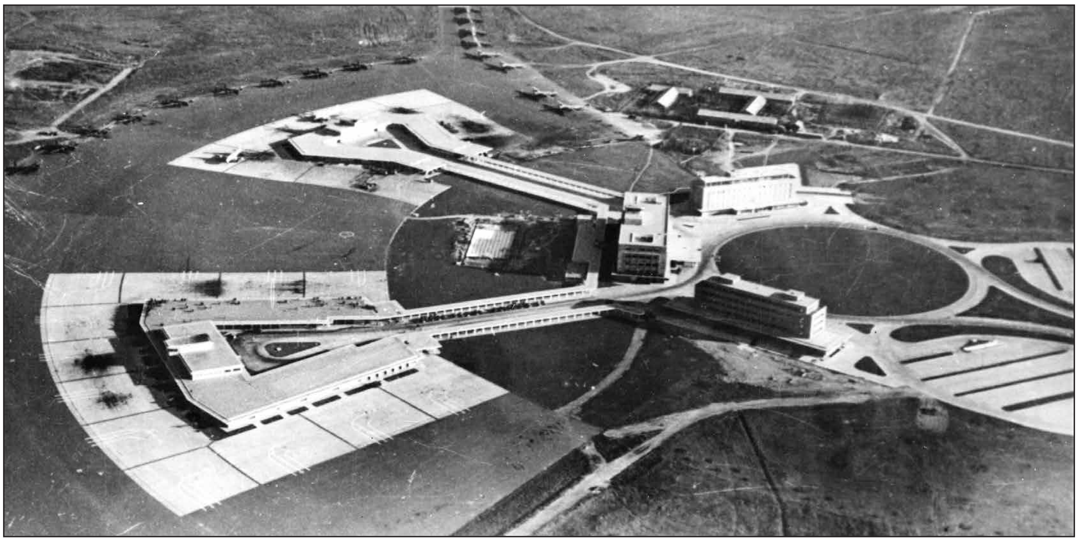
That same day, a car was urgently sent to Entre Ríos, to contact the conspirator General Bengoa and warn him that the next day he had to rebel. However, when night came, the messenger discovered that Bengoa had travelled to Buenos Aires that morning.

The bombing mission was under the command of Lieutenant Commander Jorge Alfredo Bassi. Given the sudden unleashing of events, there was little planning for the uprising of the rank and file. For example, the Argentine Air Force Captain, Agustín Héctor de la Vega, who was responsible for causing revolt at the Morón base, learned that same night that the uprising would take place the next day. Simultaneously, Commander Noriega, responsible for the Punta Indio Base, received a meteorological report that announced terrible weather conditions for the following day, but he no longer had the possibility of changing anything.

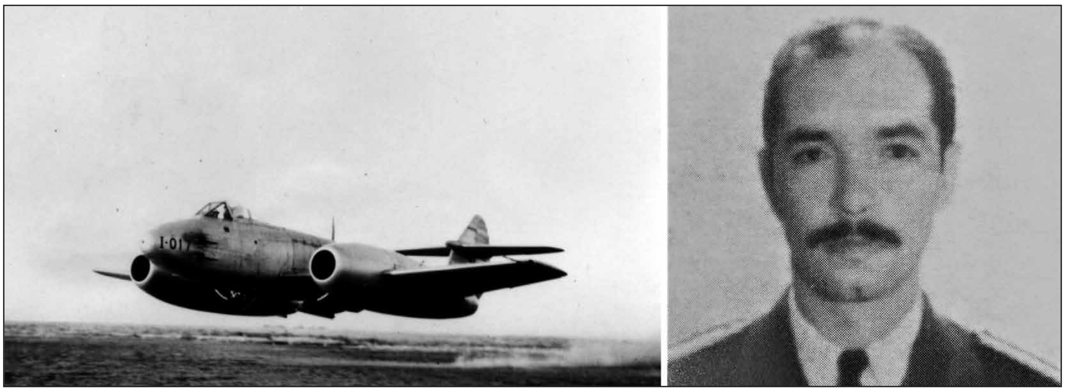
Troops from Marine Infantry Battalion No. 4 (BIM4) under the command of Vice Admiral Benjamín Gargiulo – who a few hours before had been informed about the sedition and had bowed to it – would advance from the North Dock of the Port of Buenos Aires



Boeing Canada PB2B-1 Canso serial 0276/2-P-20 of the Argentine Naval Aviation. (Histarmar Archive)



An aerial view of Ezeiza International Airport in the mid-50s. (Ezeiza Airport files via Gustavo D'Antiocchia)



A Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4 of the Argentine Air Force, and Vice Commodore Carlos Sister, who attacked the naval aircraft stationed in Ezeiza. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

to take Government House, with the armed support of civil groups stationed in the Plaza. The takeover of the Radio Mitre station and the State Telephone Centre had been planned, to broadcast a revolutionary proclamation drawn up by Miguel Ángel Zavala Ortiz. It was planned to mobilise all the units of the Navy. The revolutionaries also counted on receiving support – once the events began – from other sectors of the Army and the opposition that had not been consulted.

At the Punta Indio Naval Air Base there was a meeting of pilots in the officers' casino at 4:00 a.m. for a 'briefing'. There, the pilots were informed that the objective was to bomb the Casa Rosada, and that their aircraft were already armed. At 6:00 a.m., the aeroplanes were ready, just waiting for the weather conditions to improve. At that time, the Naval Aviation Attack Squadron had 26 North American SNJ/AT-6s, of which 21 were operational and five under maintenance. Besides this, several Douglas C-47s and C-54s were also getting ready for logistical support. Twenty AT-6s were armed with two 50 kilogram bombs and two 7.65mm machine guns with 800 rounds, and also five Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan from the Bombardment Squadron, each carrying two 110 kilogram bombs. The three Catalina/Canso amphibians that would also be used in the attack carried two 250 kilogram bombs. A total of 13,800 kilograms of explosives were going to be dropped in the assigned area.

Meanwhile, at 6:15 a.m. President Perón arrived at his office because he had a busy schedule that day. At 8:00 a.m., Perón had a meeting with members of his military team: the Minister of Defence General Sosa Molina; the Minister of the Army General Lucero; the Rear Admiral Gastón Lestrade of the Navy on behalf of the Minister of the Navy, Olivieri, who was still interned in the naval hospital; the Minister of Aeronautics Brigadier San Martín; the Chief of the SIE (Army Intelligence Service) General Jáuregui, and the assistant Major Renner. Rear Admiral Lestrade was aware of the plan to bomb the Casa Rosada but attended the meeting anyway so as not to raise suspicions. The topic discussed at the meeting revolved around the latest measures taken against the Catholic Church and also some rumours about an alleged rebellion that was underway, to which Perón did not give much importance. The theme of the air parade to honour the flag was also discussed, which would take place over Plaza de Mayo if the weather conditions improved. The meeting ended at 10:00 a.m. and the attack had not yet occurred.

Right after that, the Ambassador of the United States, Albert F. Nufer, had an audience with President Perón. When the diplomat left the Casa Rosada, Minister Lucero met with Perón to comment on an imminent attack, since naval air forces had concentrated both in Punta Indio and in Ezeiza, and he suggested to the President that he ought to leave the place and go to the Ministry of the Army building, which was safer. At around 11:00 a.m., Perón left the Casa Rosada for security reasons, but neither he nor anyone else

Two targets of the revolutionary attacks, Government House/Casa Rosada, and the building of the General Labour Confederation (CGT) in downtown Buenos Aires. (Open source)

gave precautionary orders to all the civilian personnel who worked there. Nor was any alert issued to the general population to avoid congregating in the Plaza de Mayo area, even when there was a confirmation that naval aircraft were going to bomb the area.

That morning, Vice Admiral Gargiulo harangued his men from Marine Infantry Battalion Number 4, who were not aware of the action that they would be asked to undertake. A few minutes later they were ordered to return: the rebels' take-off from Punta Indio (scheduled for 08:00 a.m. in the morning) had been delayed until 10:45 a.m. due to the morning fog, and the plan required coordination with the aerial attack. The Sea Fleet was also unable to leave Puerto Belgrano due to lack of coordination and alleged technical problems in the boilers of its ships.

At 10:15 a.m., the naval aircraft started their engines, getting ready for the mission. Finally, at 10:30 a.m. 18 Texans took off, followed by five AT-11s. One of the Texans, serial 3-A-23, had to return to base due to technical problems, but took off again later along with two others, serials 3-A-6 and 3-A-19, simultaneously with the advance of the bombers on Buenos Aires, which were joined by three armed Catalina/Canso amphibians. Commander Jorge A. Bassi led the seizure and occupation of the Ezeiza International Airport with the Marines from the Punta Indio Base who were airlifted in nine Naval Aviation Douglas C-47 aircraft under the command of Lieutenant Commander Carlos Celestino Pérez. The occupation of Ezeiza was completed without encountering resistance, as previously stated.

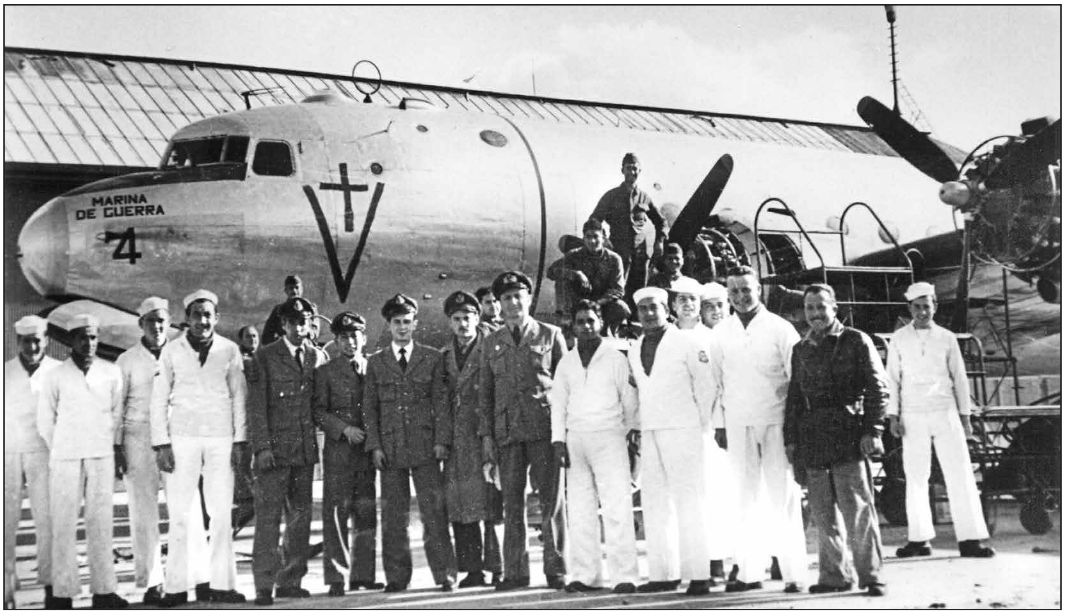
Once this target was secured, the Naval Aviation C-47s serials 4-T-20 and 4-T-22 landed there, and also the C-54s serials 4-T-4 and 4-T-5 that transported support ground personnel, bombs, fuses and 7.62mm calibre ammunition.

In summary, for the attacks carried out on Plaza de Mayo, a total of 32 aircraft were used, including 20 armed North American AT-6 Texans from the Vertical Bombardment Squadron, five Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan from the Horizontal Bombardment Squadron and three Canso/Catalina II from the Comandante Espora Air Naval Base Bombardment Squadron, all from the Naval Aviation, plus four Gloster Meteor F.4 interceptor jet fighters from the Argentine Air Force. The Beech AT-11 crews were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Beech AT-11 Crews

AT-11 Serial number	Crew
3-B-3 (Leader)	Lt. Com. Jorge Imaz Iglesias (pilot) Com. Osvaldo Guaita (co-pilot) Corvette Lt. Alex Richmond (bomber) Chief Corporal Roberto Nava (gunner) Midshipman Miguel Grondona (supernumerary)
3-B-4	Ship Lt. Carlos J. Fraguío (pilot) Com. Néstor Noriega (co-pilot & bomber) Corvette Lt. Roberto Benito Moya (navigator) 1st NCO José Radrizzi (gunner)
3-B-11	Ship Lt. Jorge Irigoin (pilot) Frigate Lt. Augusto Artigas (co-pilot) Corvette Lt. Santiago Martínez Autin (navigator) Chief Corporal Francisco Calvi (gunner)
3-B-6	Frigate Lt. Alfredo Eustaquio (pilot) Corvette Lt. Hugo Adamoli (co-pilot) 1st NCO Maciel (navigator) 1st NCO Girardi (gunner)
3-B-10	Frigate Lt. Alfredo del Fresno (pilot) Corvette Lt. Carlos Corti (co-pilot) 1st NCO Mario Héctor Mercante (navigator) 1st NCO Ricardo Díaz (gunner)

The AT-6 Texan crews were: Lieutenant Commader Santiago Sabarots (leader), Ship Lieutenants Héctor Florido, Eduardo Velarde and Tomás Orsi, Frigate Lieutenants Raúl Robatto, Heriberto Frind and Carlos García, Corvette Lieutenants José Huergo, Julio Cano, José Demartini, Eduardo Invierno, Luís Suárez and Máximo Rivero Kelly, Midshipmen Arnaldo Román (shot down in the River Plate), César Dennehy, Eduardo Bisso (shot down near Ezeiza), Héctor Cordero, Sergio Rodríguez, Horacio Estrada and Juan Romanella. The PBY Catalina crews were Lieutenant Commander Enrique García Mansilla, Ship Lieutenant René Buteler and Ship Lieutenant Carlos Vélez.



Naval officers, NCOs and sailors posing next to a Naval Aviation DC-4 with the 'Cristo Vence' insignia painted on the fuselage. (Juan Carlos Cicalesi collection, via Esteban Racynski)

Commander Néstor Noriega who crewed the AT-11 serial 3-B-4 in the bombing of Casa Rosada in June 1955, and an AT-11 of the Naval Aviation. (Aviación Naval Argentina)

A Boeing Stearman PT-17 of the Argentine Naval Aviation. (Histarmar Archive)

The rebel Argentine Air Force officers who flew the Meteors were: Captains Carús, Arrechea, Imadevilla and Mauro Ozaita. Other Air Force officers who carried out the mission of destroying the radio station antennas for the rebel forces were Captain Juan Bohler, Lieutenant Luis Masserini, Lieutenant Guillermo Palacio, 1st Lieutenant Luis Soto, 1st Lieutenant Juan C. Carpio and 1st Lieutenant Enrique Marelli.

Some of the naval planes that participated in the Plaza de Mayo bombing had been painted with the sign of 'Cristo Vence' (Christ Beats), a cross drawn inside a letter V. After Perón's exile, his supporters modified this symbol by adding a curved arch in the upper right sector of the cross, and thus the sign 'Perón Vuelve' (Perón Returns), or according to others 'Perón Vence' (Perón Beats), 'Perón Vive' (Perón Lives), 'Perón Viene' (Perón Comes) was formed.

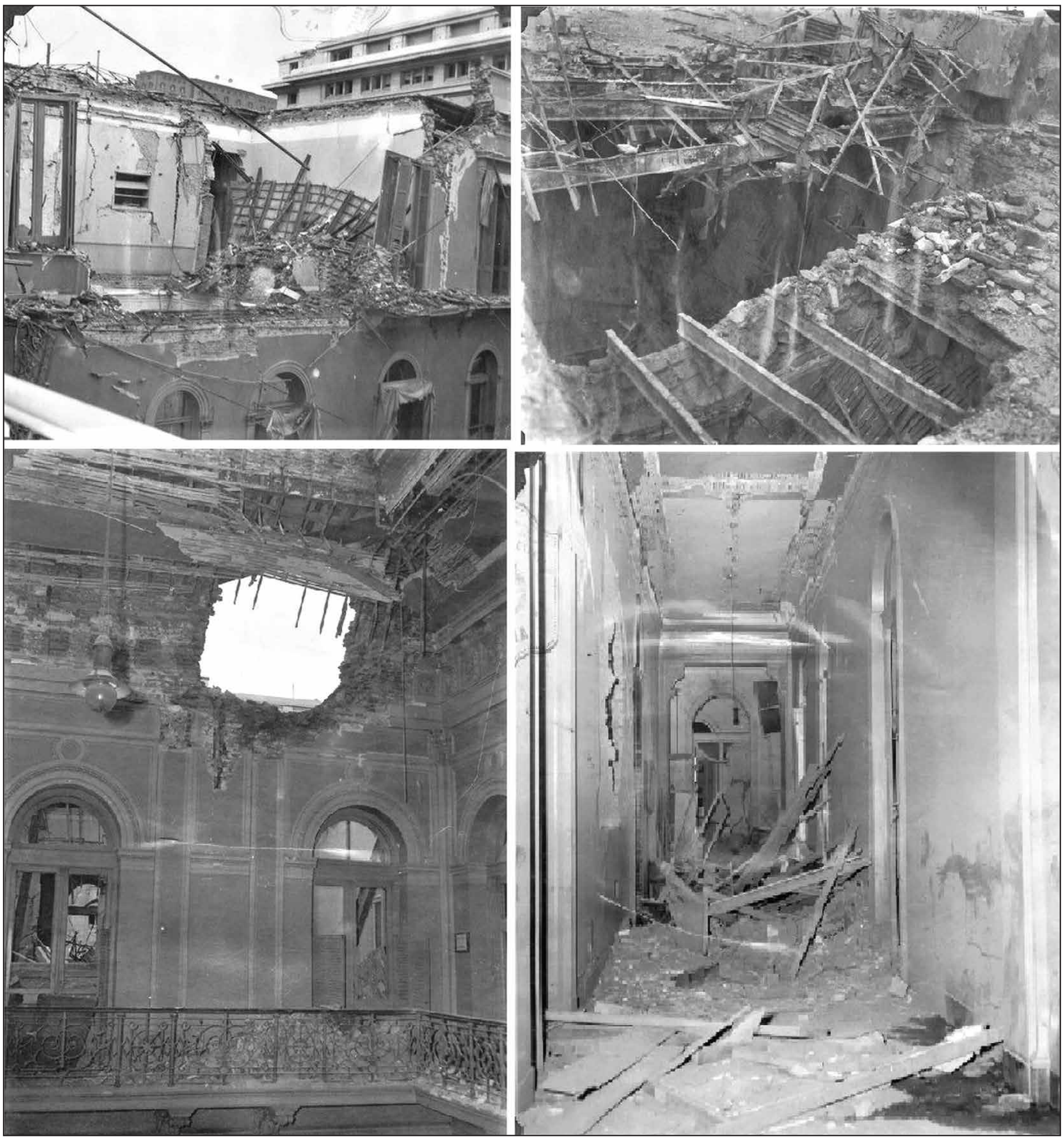
The formation of 28 naval aircraft flew in a holding pattern over the Río de la Plata, waiting for the fog to dissipate. After more than an hour of flight had elapsed without receiving specific orders, the situation of the Texan squadron became uncertain due to fuel consumption and weather conditions that caused the dispersal of the formation. Faced with this situation, a Texan, serial 3-A-19, was sent to Ezeiza to verify the situation and the squadron leader decided to send a patrol of two other Texan*s*, serials 3-A-29 and 3-A-23, for reconnaissance of the Motorised Regiment based in the Palermo neighbourhood. Once there, they realised that the Shermans and the Universal Carriers had already left, as well as all the antiaircraft batteries, which were advancing on Plaza de Mayo.

Meanwhile, at the Punta Indio Base, which was practically deserted, Commander Abel Trevino, a supporter of General Perón, seized the Stearman serial 4-G-17, taking off and flying towards Buenos Aires to report on the coup that was taking place.

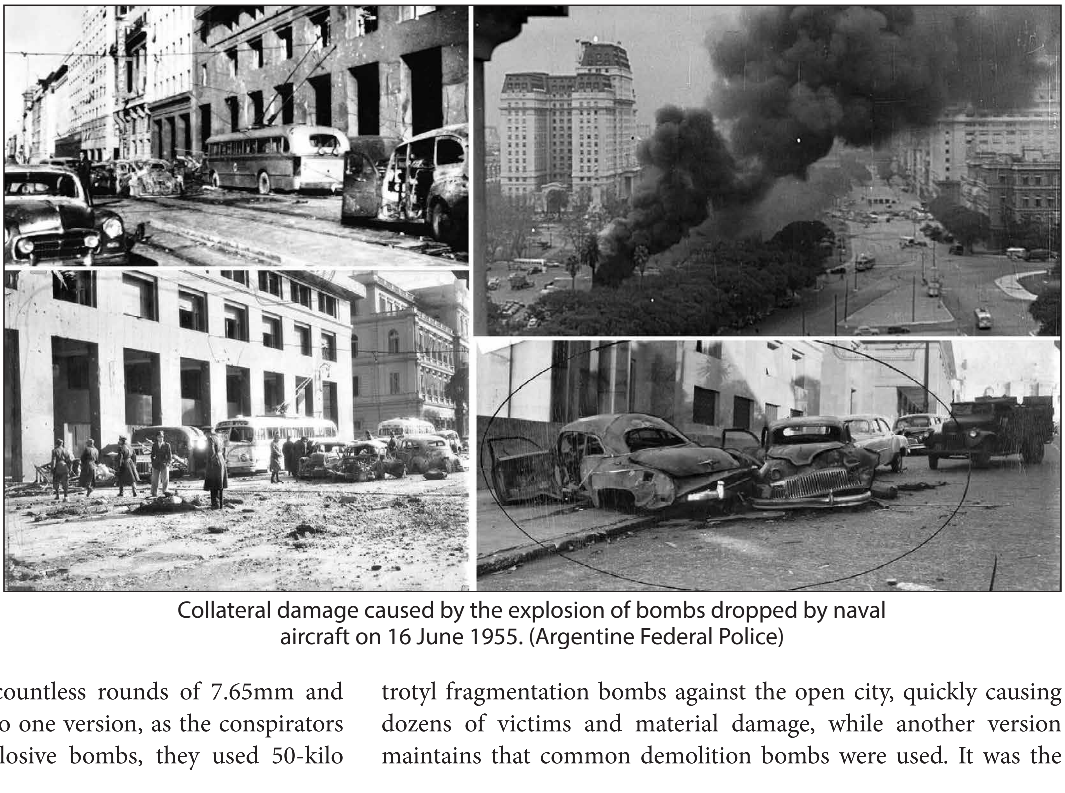
Around noon, downtown Buenos Aires had the usual rhythm of a working day. In addition, as it had been announced in the press that an Air Force Gloster Meteor F.4 squadron would make a pass for a tribute, people began to gather in Plaza de Mayo, as well as journalists and photographers.

At 12:22 a.m., an Air Force Sikorsky S-55, crewed by Sergeant Jorge Álvarez, took off from El Palomar Air Base, transporting a captain to the Ministry of the Army building in downtown Buenos Aires. It barely landed on a square in front of the building, leaving the captain who was bringing fresh news from the Air Force to Generals Perón and Lucero, who were at that time on the sixth floor of the Ministry of the Army.

After almost three hours of flight, at 12:45 a.m., Commander Néstor Noriega gave the order to attack, using the pre-set code '*Ministro de Marina*' (Minister of the Navy). The AT-11s were the first to drop bombs on the Casa Rosada. The AT-11 commanded by Noriega dropped the first two 110-kilogram bombs, one of them entering the skylight of the Casa Rosada, exploding in the winter garden. The other fell in front of the Ministry of Finance. The bombardment was not done in squadrons but in line, given the low ceiling of clouds. The aircraft line unloaded their bombs and shrapnel one by one. After the five AT-11s and three Catalinas, it was the turn of the 20 AT-6s. Right after the first bombs fell, Government House's antiaircraft defence was activated. Although no attacking aircraft were shot down, several were hit by bullets.



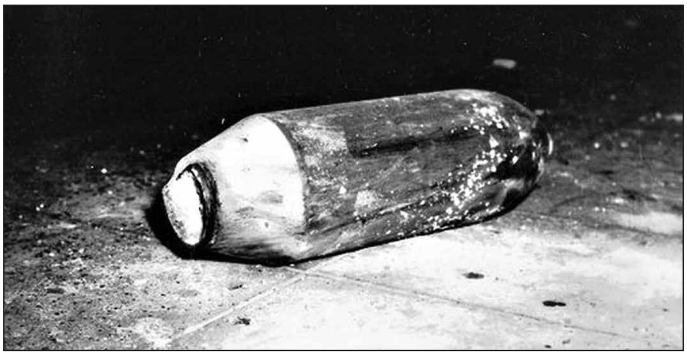
Some of the damage caused to the Casa Rosada due to the naval aircraft bombing raid. (Argentine Federal Police)



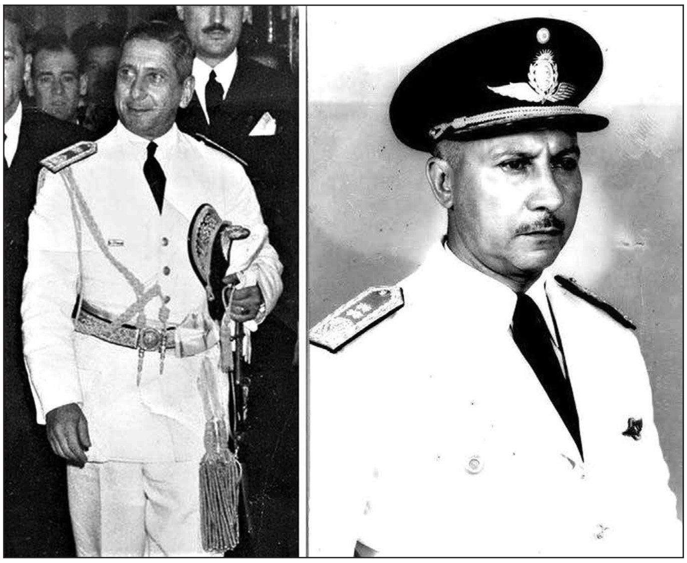
Collateral damage caused by the explosion of bombs dropped by naval aircraft on 16 June 1955. (Argentine Federal Police)

Faced with the disbelief and confusion of the situation, a large number of horrified people who were in Plaza de Mayo began to flee when the first bombs exploded. Dantesque scenes of dead civilians were seen, some with mutilated bodies; there were hundreds of injured people and countless cars and buses were destroyed. Among the first victims were the occupants of public passenger transport vehicles. One bomb fell on a trolley bus packed with passengers, killing all its occupants. This attack against civilians was the first air attack against surface targets of both the Naval Aviation and the Argentine Air Force. The forces dropped a total of 13,800 kilograms of bombs and fired countless rounds of 7.65mm and 20mm ammunition. According to one version, as the conspirators did not obtain high-power explosive bombs, they used 50-kilo trotyl fragmentation bombs against the open city, quickly causing dozens of victims and material damage, while another version maintains that common demolition bombs were used. It was the

Widely published photos of some of the civilian victims of the 16 June 1955 bombings. (Open source)



One of the bombs dropped by naval aircraft that did not explode. (Argentine Federal Police)



The Minister of Aeronautics, Brigadier General San Martín (left), and the Commander of the Argentine Air Force, Brigadier Juan Fabri (right). (Open source)

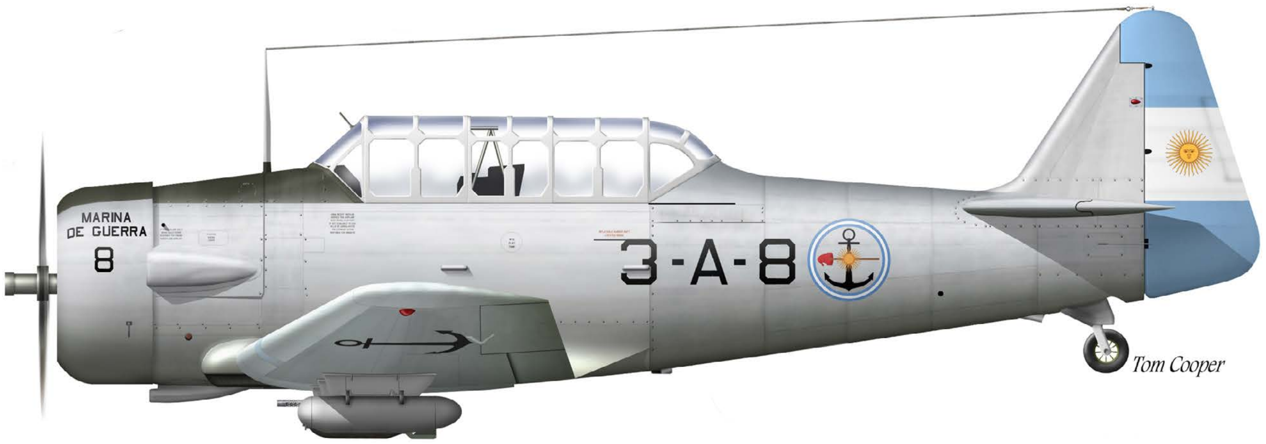
fourth bombardment of Buenos Aires; the first had been on the occasion of the British invasions of 1806 and 1807, the second on the occasion of the combat of Los Pozos (1826) and the third when the Revolution of the Parque took place (1890). It was estimated that 308 people died and more than 700 were wounded in the attack. Medical evacuations began immediately, some even amid the aerial bombardments, and were carried out by residents in the immediate vicinity.

Not all the dropped bombs exploded as they should have been dropped from 1,000 metres, but due to weather conditions, they were dropped only 400 metres away and failed to arm themselves.

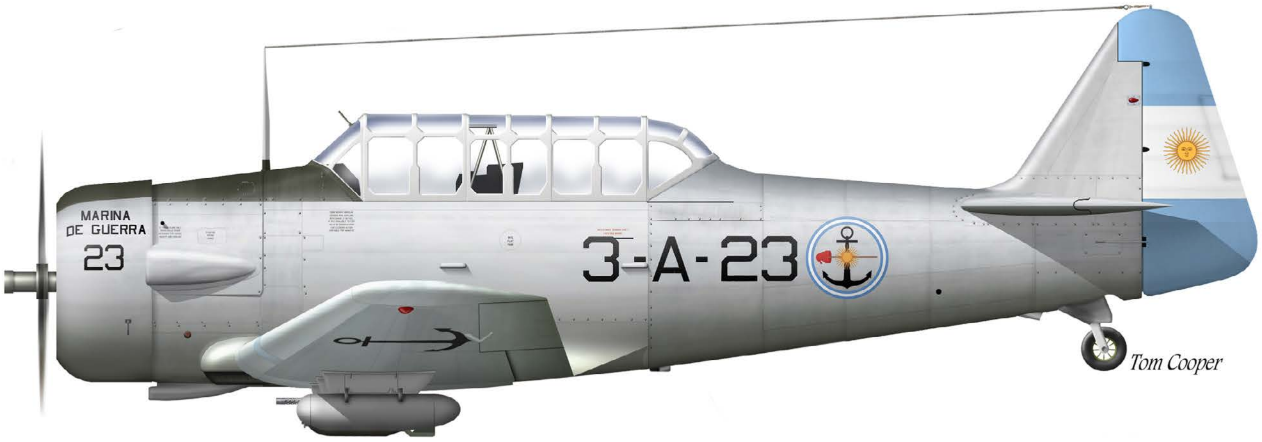
After the explosion of the first bombs, Perón went down from the sixth floor to the basement of the Ministry of the Army because the shock wave from a bomb that exploded near the building destroyed the office where he was located. At that time, the President asked his Minister of Aeronautics, Brigadier General San Martín, about the delay of the loyalist planes to stop the attack. Both were unaware at the time that many Air Force officers and pilots had also joined the revolution. The minister replied that in minutes the Avro Lincoln bombers from San Luis would arrive to destroy Ezeiza. It was then that the President told him not to drop any bombs at the then-new Ezeiza International Airport, as it had taken such effort and cost many millions of dollars. This international airport had been built in 1945 and opened in 1949 during Perón's first presidency, and bore the name of 'Ministro Pistarini', the main promoter of the project, when General Juan Pistarini was the Minister of Public Works. It began to be used by the Naval Aviation in 1951, when the latter left Bernardino Rivadavia Airport in Morón, as the headquarters for naval air transport. At the beginning of 1950, the Navy signed an agreement with the airline *Flota Aérea Mercante Argentina* (FAMA), to use a hangar, a building and other related facility. After the coup of 16 June 1955, their eviction was ordered, but the Liberating Revolution of 16 September of the same year annulled this imposition. As of 1956, the Ezeiza Air Naval Base (BAEZ) began to be spoken of, and its official date of birth was set at 26 January 1956. Despite the recorded antecedents Ezeiza has since been the preferred seat of the Naval Air Transport Command and its successors.

Three Texans, serials 3-A-29, 3-A-18 and 3-A-22, carried out a reconnaissance flight over Infantry Regiment Number 3 'General Manuel Belgrado' of La Tablada. The naval AT-6s also managed to stop the advance towards Ezeiza of the aforementioned Army unit loyal to the government, attacking a column on Crovara Avenue. As a result of this action, a truck was destroyed, causing several casualties amongst its occupants.

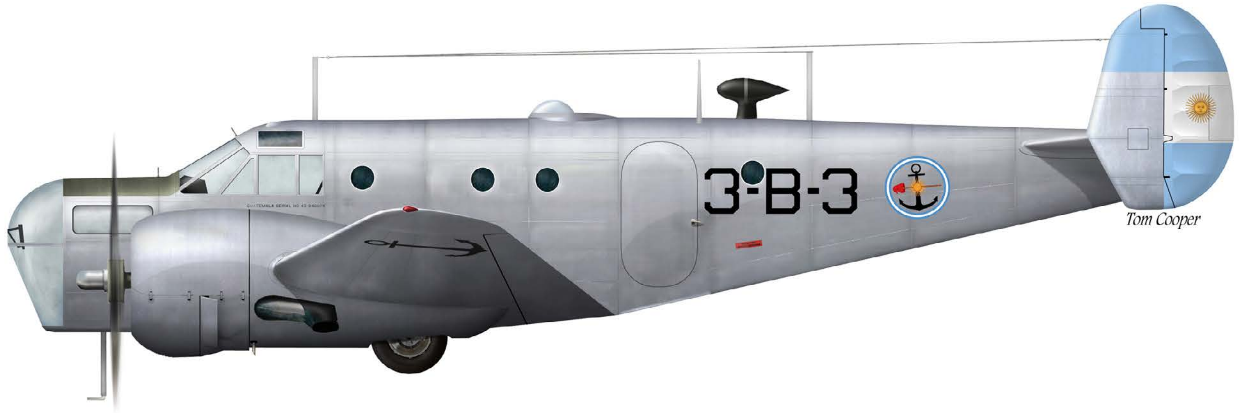
The naval aircraft, after the first wave, went to refuel at Ezeiza, and to rearm with ammunition and bombs. At that time, after the first attack, the Marines hidden in the basement of the Ministry of the Navy, who were all armed with Belgian semi-automatic FN FAL rifles, set out to take the Casa Rosada, being transported by Navy trucks. Upon reaching the place, they were repelled by the grenadiers of the Presidential Guard and the reinforcements they received from the Motorised Regiment, with troops and four Sherman tanks led



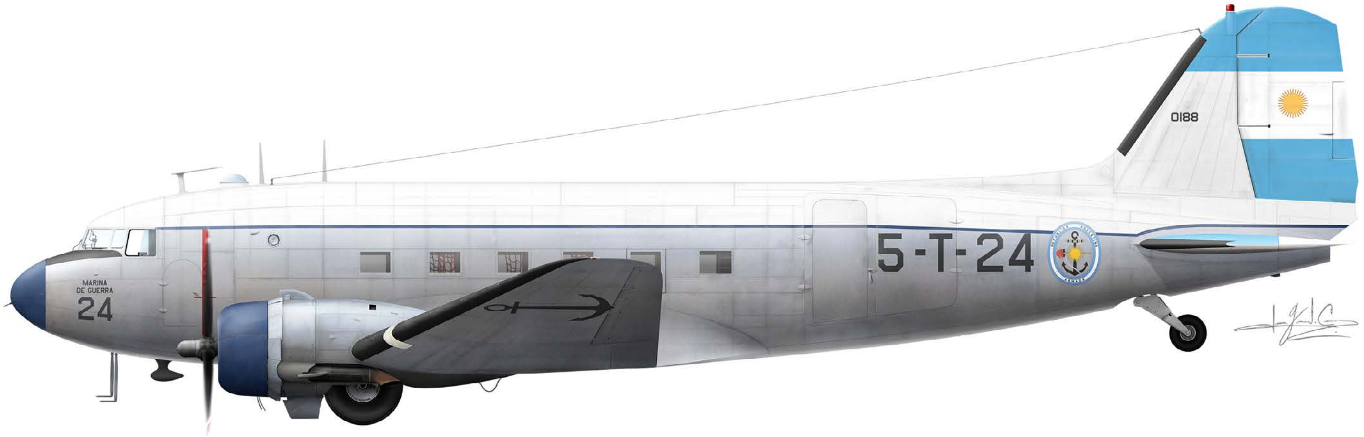
This North American AT-6A Texan – serial 3-A-8 – was one of 20 operated by the Command of Naval Aviation, and one of those involved in the attack on Plaza de Mayo on 16 June 1955. As far as is known (mainly from contemporary photographs), all were left in bare metal overall, and armed with a pair of gun pods each containing a 7.62mm machine gun with either 100 or 150 rounds. The gun pods were usually installed on outboard underwing hardpoints, while inboard hardpoints were used for US-made AN/M57 125lbs (57kg) bombs. 3-A-8 was eventually flown into exile in Uruguay. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



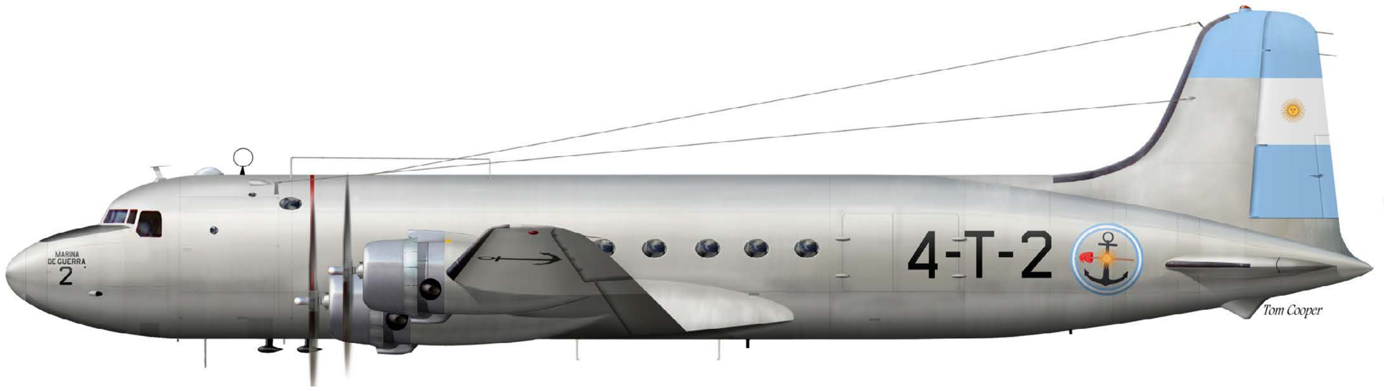
Another AT-6 of the Naval Aviation involved in attacks on Plaza de Mayo on 16 June 1955 was this example, serial 3-A-23. Together with 3-A-29, and while piloted by Midshipman Armando Román, it carried out a reconnaissance flight of the Palermo Motorised Regiment. Later on, while underway over Aeroparque, it was intercepted and shot down by the Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4 serial I-063, flown by Lieutenant Ernesto Adradás. Román managed to bail out safely. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



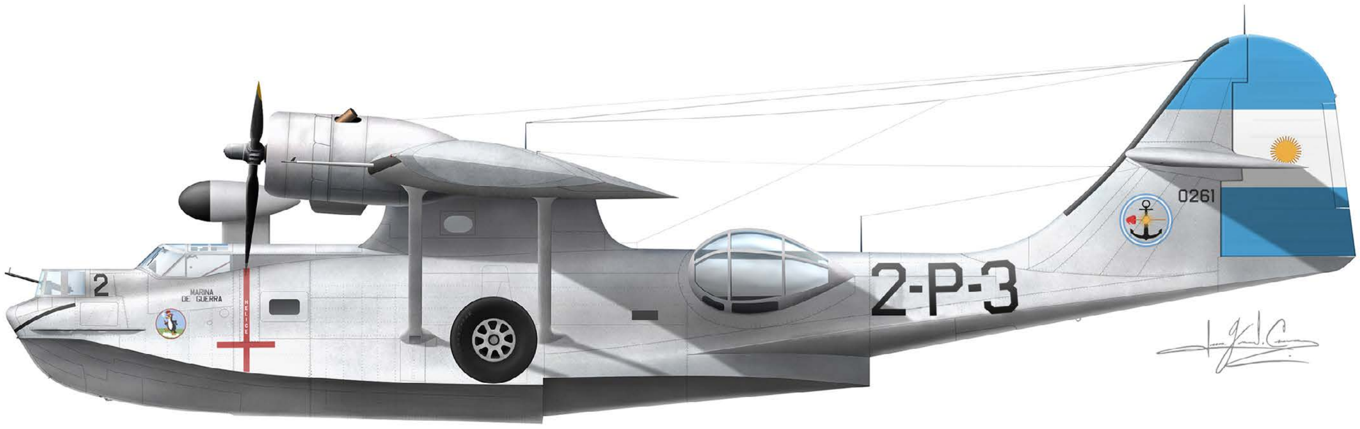
Another type deployed by the Naval Aviation for strikes on the Plaza de Mayo on 16 June 1955 was the Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan. The leading aircraft of this formation wore the serial number 3-B-3 and was piloted by Lieutenant Commander Jorge Imaz Iglesias (pilot), Commodore Osvaldo Guita (co-pilot) Corvette Lieutenenat Alex Richmond (bombardier), Chief Corporal Roberto Nava (gunner), and Midshipman Miguel Grondona (supernumerary). It is known to have been armed with two 110kg bombs. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



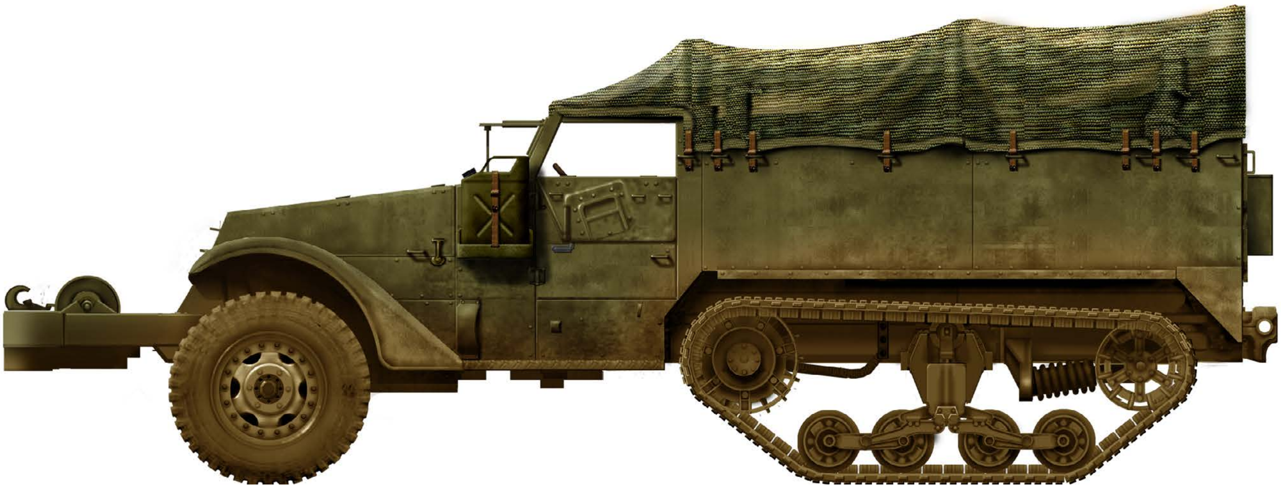
Unlike the AT-6s and AT-11s of the Naval Aviation, Douglas C-47 transports – of which the Naval Command acquired 15 between 1946 and 1979 – began having the topsides of their fuselage painted in white by 1955, while the rest was left in bare metal overall. Initially, all were operated by the 2nd Squadron of the Naval Air Transport Command, but later they were re-assigned to the 2nd Mobile Support Squadron. During the events of 1955, they were heavily tasked with transporting Marines and ammunition, and no fewer than seven were flown by crews fleeing to Uruguay. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



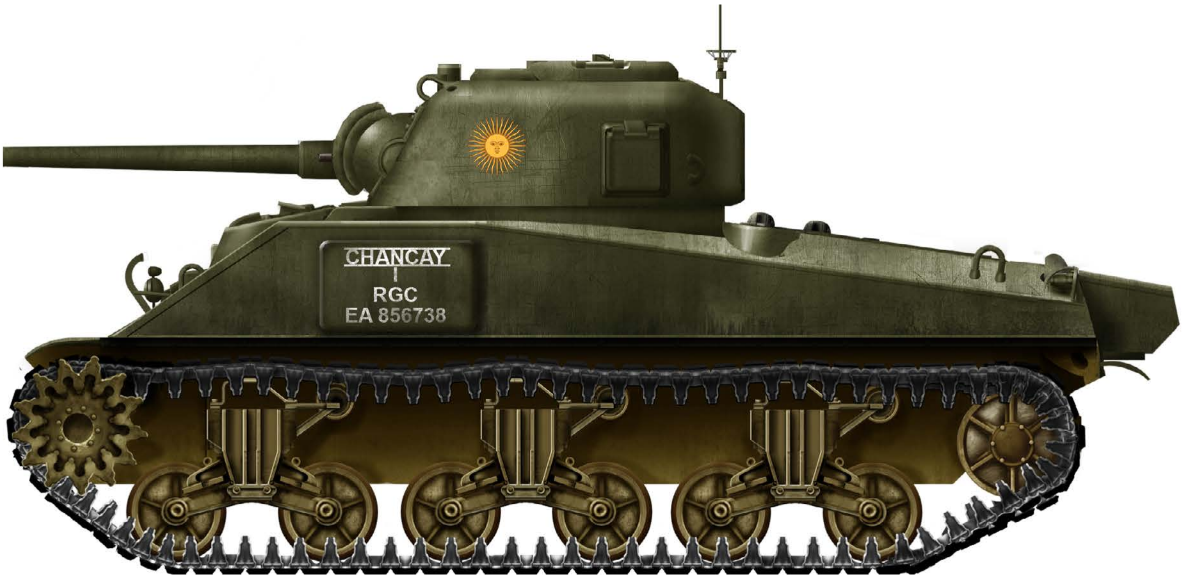
The Command of Naval Aviation acquired no fewer than seven Douglas C-54 Skymaster transports between 1947 and 1976. Several of them became involved in the events of 1955, mainly in their primary role as transports. All were still left in bare metal overall livery, and wore serials applied according to the new system, denoting the unit operating them, and individual airframes. 4-T-2 was one of the C-54s flown out to Uruguay – but, like all other Argentine aircraft, was eventually returned to its owner. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



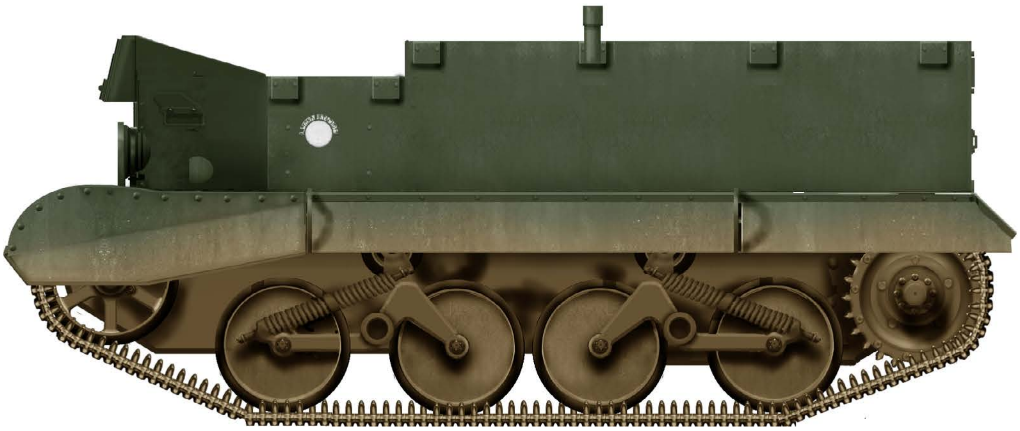
The Command of Naval Aviation acquired a total of 17 Boeing Canada PB2B-1 Canso amphibians and Consolidated PBY-5 Catalina amphibians between 1946 and 1970. Three of the former participated in attacks on Plaza de Mayo on 16 June 1955, armed with Colt M2 .303" machine guns in their nose turrets, and two .50-cal machine guns in rear blisters. Each could carry up to 4,000kg of bombs, too, but seem not to have deployed these. All three Cansos flown by mutineers on that day were eventually flown into exile in Urugay. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



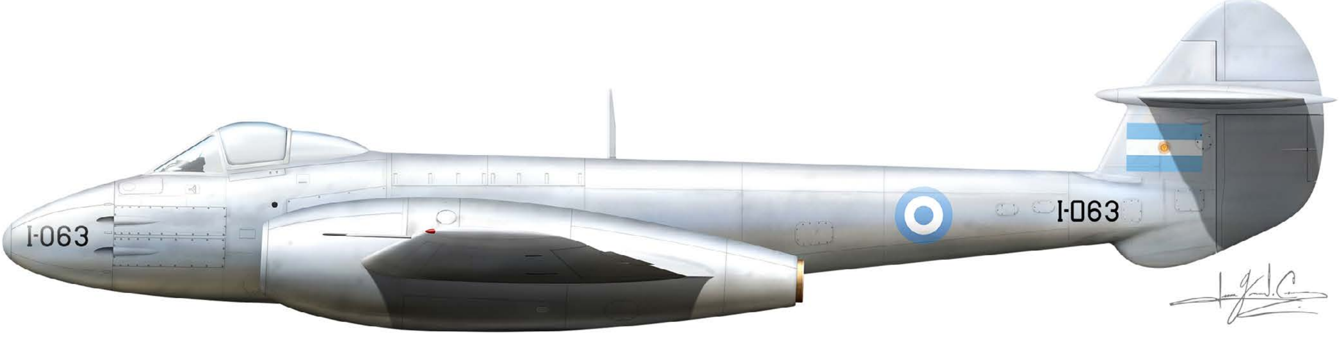
The primary armoured personnel carrier of the Argentine Army during the 1950s was the US-made M3 half-track. Over 320 were acquired, including M5 and M59 variants during the late 1940s. These were used widely, both by infantry and by cavalry units, which frequently armed them with heavy machine guns, light anti-aircraft guns, or even howitzers. As far as is known, all were painted in dark olive green overall, and wore no other insignia. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



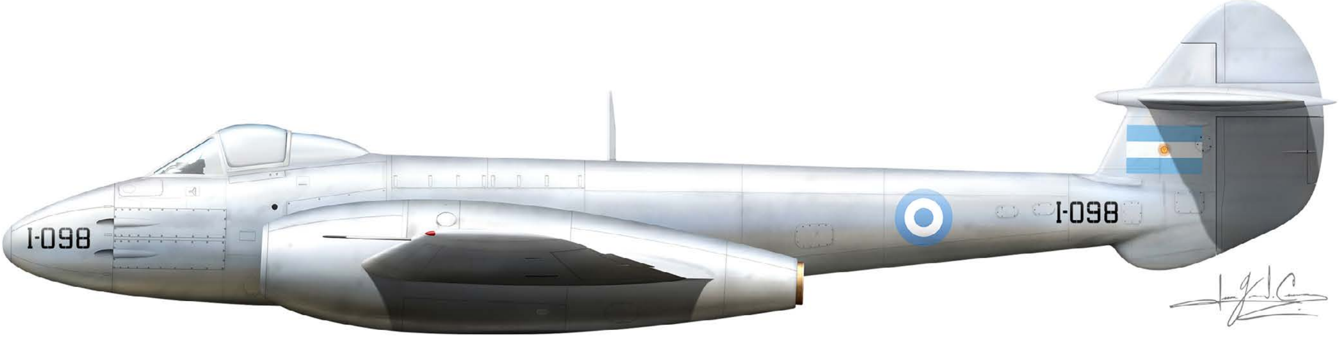
Starting in 1946, cavalry units of the Argentine Army were equipped with a total of 120 Sherman IVC/VC Firefly tanks armed with 17-pounder (76.2mm) guns. In 1948, these were followed by 206 Sherman M4A4s armed with 75mm guns, one of which is shown here. Both versions were actively involved in fighting not only in the coup of 1955, but also in the events of 1962–63 during the confrontation in the Armed Forces. Subsequently, survivors were modernised and served long enough to see deployment during Operation Soberanía, the stand-off with Chile over the Beagle Channel, in 1978. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



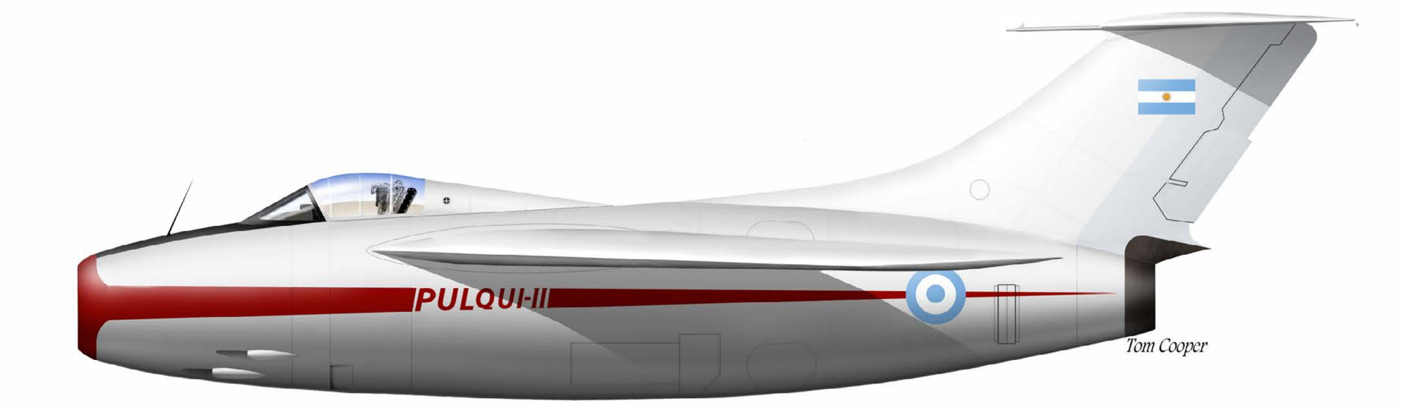
In addition to US-made M3/M5/M59 half-tracks, in 1948 the Argentine Army acquired 250 British-made T-16 Universal Carriers. Most were used to carry 12.7mm Browning machine guns. This type was heavily involved in the events of 1955, at which time all retained their dark green overall livery, but many received a small white insignia – possibly in style of the Sun of the Argentinean national flag. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



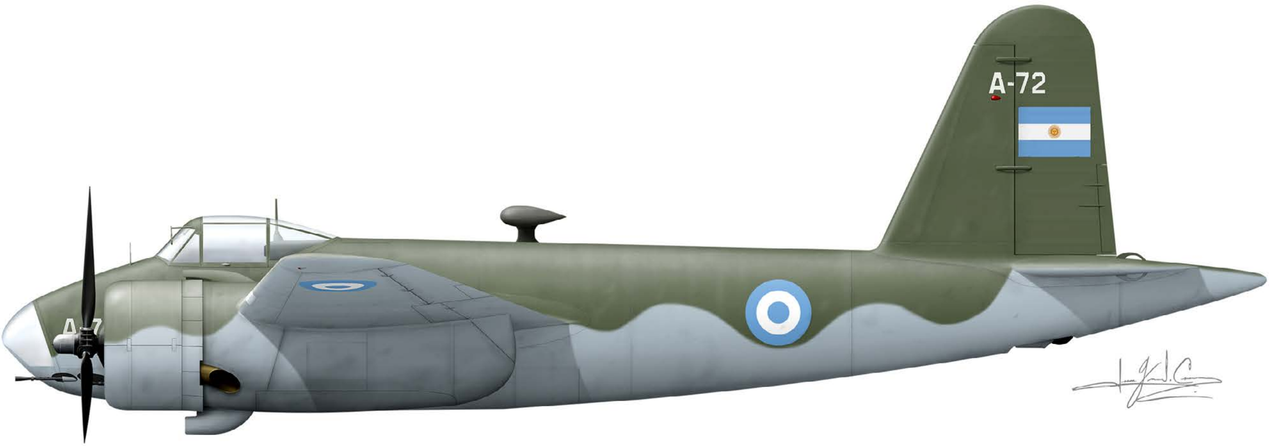
In 1947, Argentina became the launching customer when it ordered 100 Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4 fighters from Great Britain. They were operated by 2nd and 3rd Fighter Groups of VI Air Brigade at Tandil Air Base, as interceptors and thus wore serials I (standing for 'interceptor') -001 to I-100. Several became involved in the fighting of 16 June 1955. This example was piloted by loyalist Lieutenant Ernesto Adradás when he shot down the rebel AT-6A serial 3-A-23 over Buenos Aires, using the jet's four Hispano-Suiza 20mm guns. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



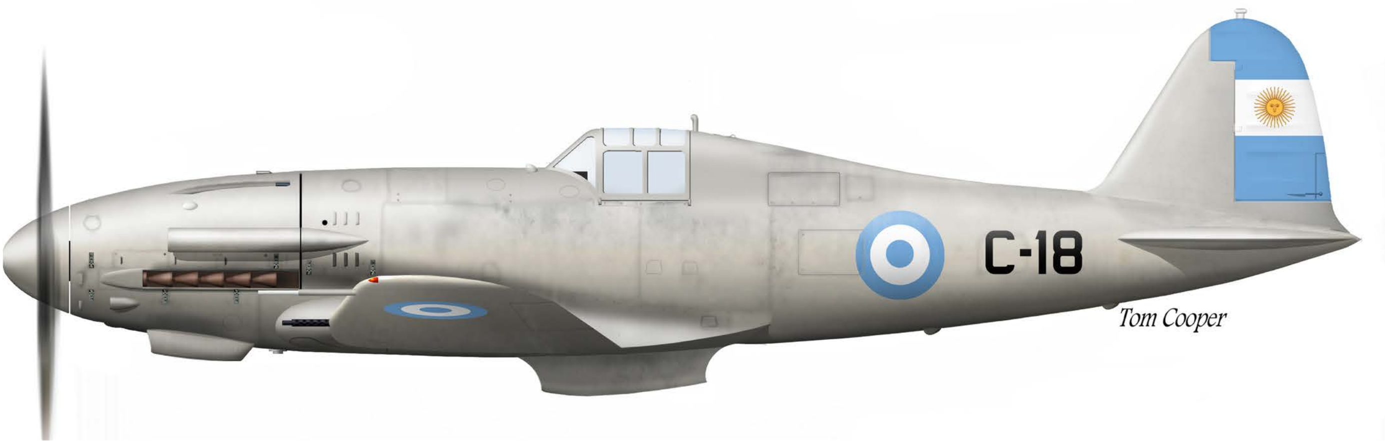
Another of Argentine Air Force Meteor F.Mk 4 to become involved in fighting on 15 June 1955 was this example, serial I-098. While piloted by Captain Carlos Carús, it led two other jets in the last rebel attack on the Plaza de Mayo, Government House, and the Central Police Department. In the course of that action, it received a hit on the right wing, but remained operational. Carús and his wingmen (who flew Meteors with serial numbers I-058 and I-094) then headed for Colonia, in Uruguay, where they requested political asylum. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



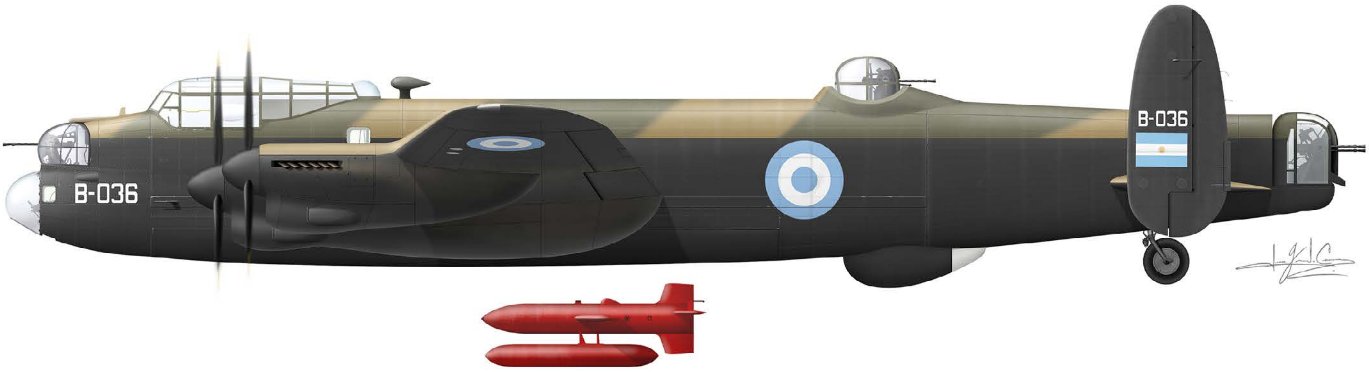
In the late 1940s, German aircraft designer Kurt Tank (who had worked for Focke Wulf during the Second World War), moved to Argentina and launched work on a jet fighter. Based on his unrealised Ta.183 of 1944–1945, and constructed by Fábrica Militar de Aviones (FMA), the resulting IAe.33 Pulqui II underwent a problematic and lengthy development: two out of four prototypes were lost in fatal crashes. Prototype Number 4, depicted here, saw combat in the Córdoba area during the *Revolución Libertadora* of 1955, but political, economic, and technical issues then prevented its series production, and ultimately the Argentine Air Force opted to purchase North American F-86 Sabres from the USA. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



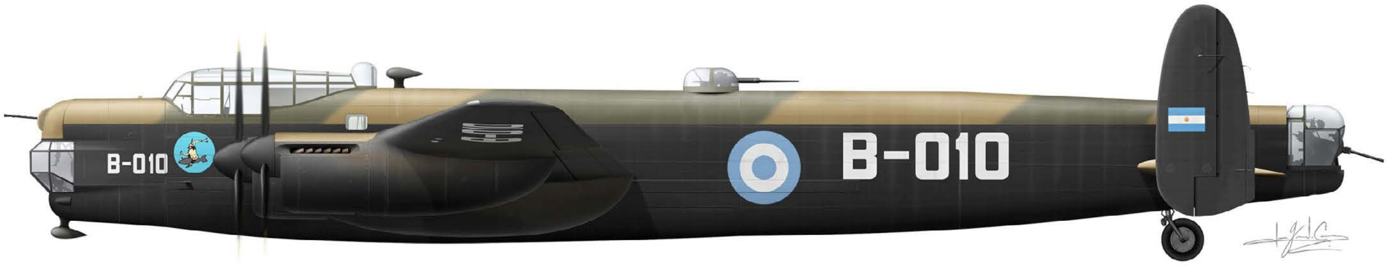
Relatively little-known outside Argentina, the FMA IAe.24 Calquín was another indigenous design, roughly comparable to the de Havilland Mosquito. The Air Force acquired a total of 101, and operated them from 1947 until 1959, mainly with the 1st Attack Group, home-based at El Plumerillo Air Base (IV Air Brigade), and the 2nd Attack Group in Reconquista (III Air Brigade). The Calquín's primary armament consisted either of four 12.7mm Browning machine guns, or four 20mm Hispano-Suiza 804 guns. They could also carry up to twelve 75mm unguided rockets, or 800kg of bombs. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



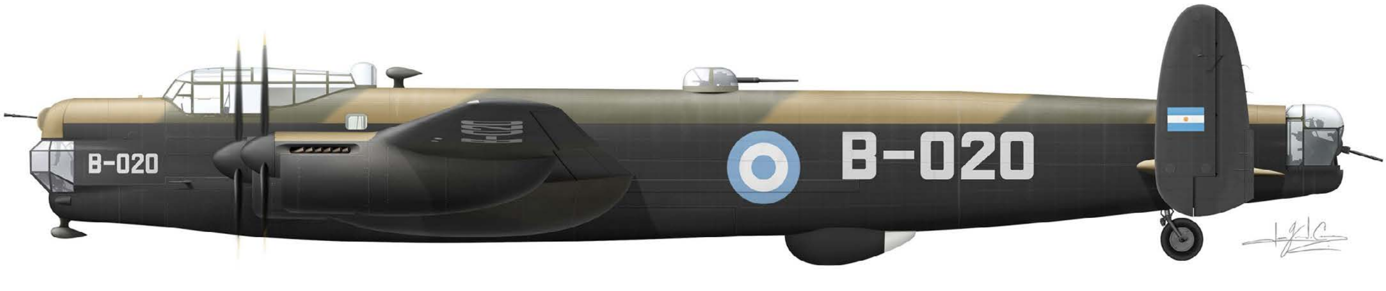
In another major acquisition of 1947, the Argentine Air Force purchased 30 Fiat G.55A Centauro single-seat fighters (including one Merlin-powered G.59-1A), and 15 Fiat G.55B two-seat conversion trainers from Italy. Powered by licence-built Daimler-Benz DB.605A-1 engines, they served with the 1st Fighter Group of IV Air Brigade in El Plumerillo, in Mendoza. Both variants began suffering engine- and undercarriage-related problems, and numerous aircraft were lost in accidents: thus, the entire fleet was withdrawn from service by 1954. Nevertheless, several rebel pilots attempted to fly them to the Punta Indio Naval Air Base where all were arrested on arrival and their aircraft immobilised. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



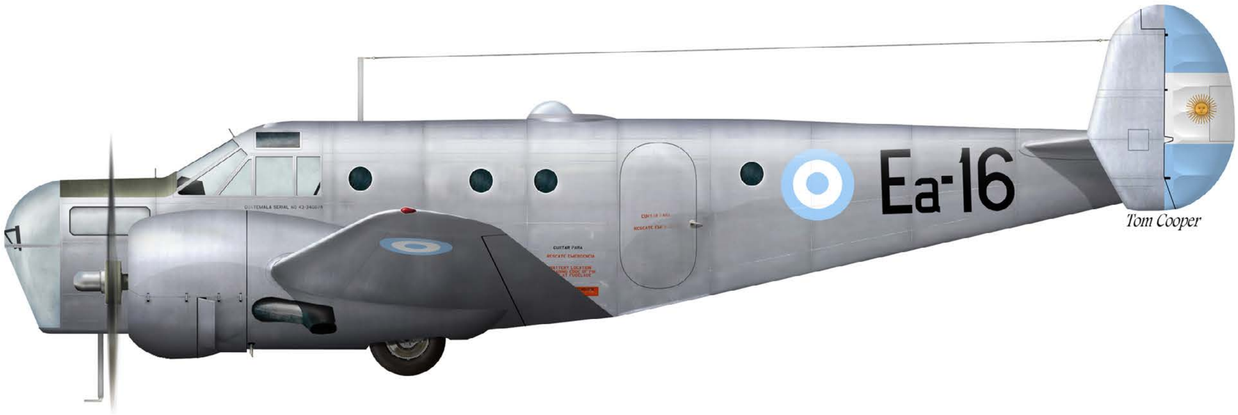
In 1947, the Argentine Air Force acquired 15 second-hand Avro Lancaster B.Mk 1 bombers and assigned them to the 2nd Bombardment Group of V Air Brigade, home-based in Villa Reynolds. Starting in 1950, one of them – serial B-036 – was assigned to the Area de Material de Río Cuarto for testing the locally-developed PAT-1 guided air-to-ground missile (based on the German-made Henschel Hs.293 from the Second World War). Contrary to some claims in Argentina, this combination was never deployed in combat. This Lancaster (which had its radome removed during the testing of the PAT-1) was lost in an engine-related accident during the testing of the missile, off the coast of Quilmes, on 20 October 1953. (Artworks by Luca Canossa and Tom Cooper)



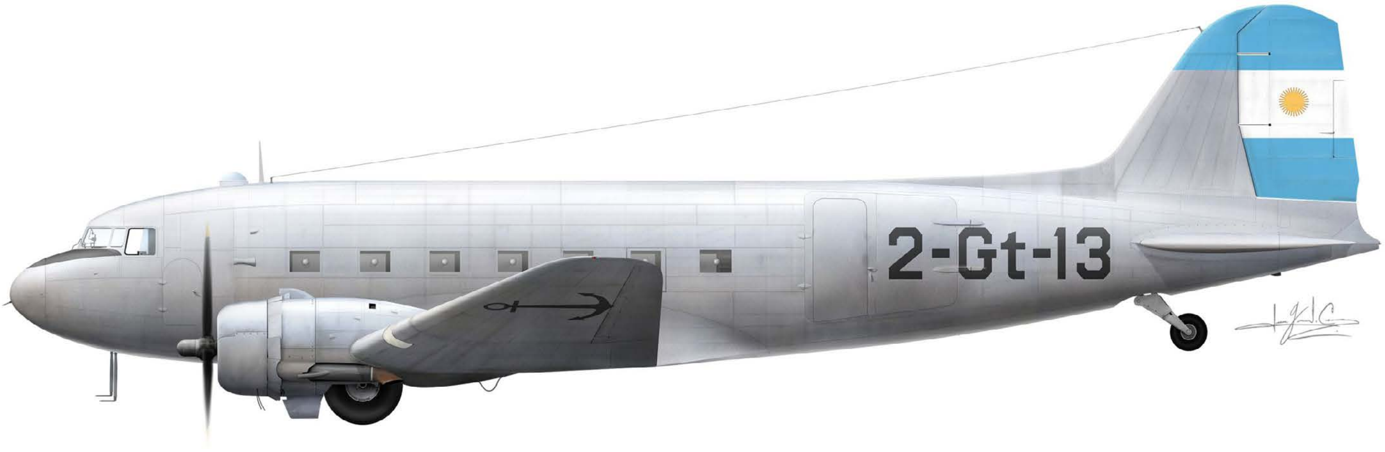
Hard on the heels of Lancaster B.Mk Is, Buenos Aires followed with the acquisition of 30 Avro 694 Lincoln B.Mk 2 bombers from Great Britain (18 newly-built and 12 ex-RAF), thus obtaining the most powerful bomber-fleet in South America. An upgraded and up-rated version of the Lancaster, the Lincoln had a crew of seven, could carry up to 9,979kg of bombs, and was armed with six 7.7mm Vickers machine guns. They were all operated by the 1st Bombardment Group of V Air Brigade, from Villa Reynolds Air Base, from 1947 and for the next 20 years. This example is shown with the 'Patoruzú' insignia applied underneath the cockpit. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



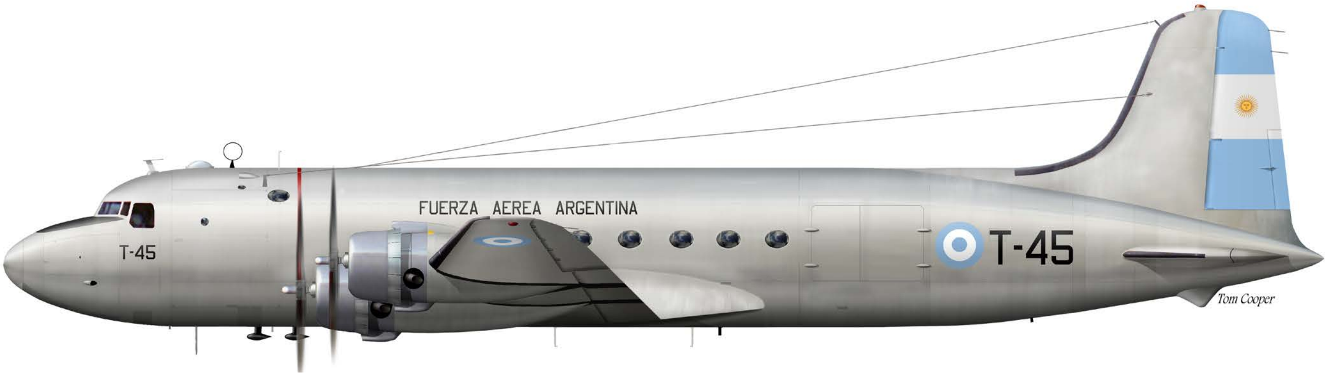
The Argentine Air Force's Lincoln fleet played a very active role during a number of events in this period. In 1948, one example was modified for Antarctic operations through the addition of extra fuel tanks and removal of its armament (wearing a civilian registration and the name Cruz del Sur, it flew supplies to the Antarctic San Martin Base). In September 1951, several Lincolns saw combat during a coup attempt, and in 1955 they were used both by the loyalist and rebel forces during the *Revolucion Libertadora*, and again during the follow-up coup in September when, amongst others, they bombed the Naval School at Río Santiago and the Army Artillery School in Córdoba (where two loyalist crews defected to the rebels, earning themselves the nick-name 'pancakes' for switching sides). (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



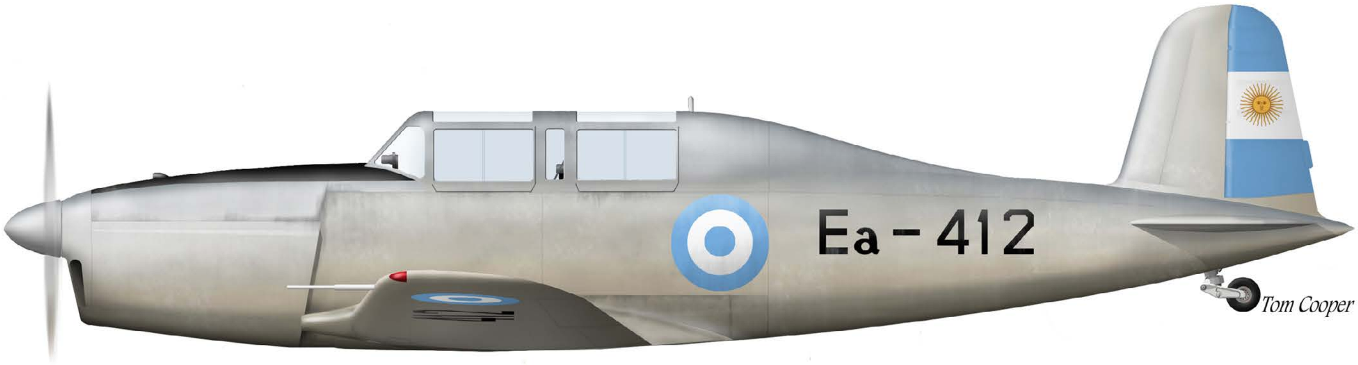
In addition to the Naval Aviation, 30 Beechcraft AT-11s were operated as light bombers and navigation trainers by the Argentine Air Force between 1958 and 1963. A few were assigned to I Air Brigade, at El Palomar; some served with the I Transport Group and with the 1st Observation Group in Paraná (II Air Brigade), while the balance was operated by III Air Brigade in Reconquista. Like AT-11s of the Naval Aviation, they had their dorsal turrets removed, but could still load bombs. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



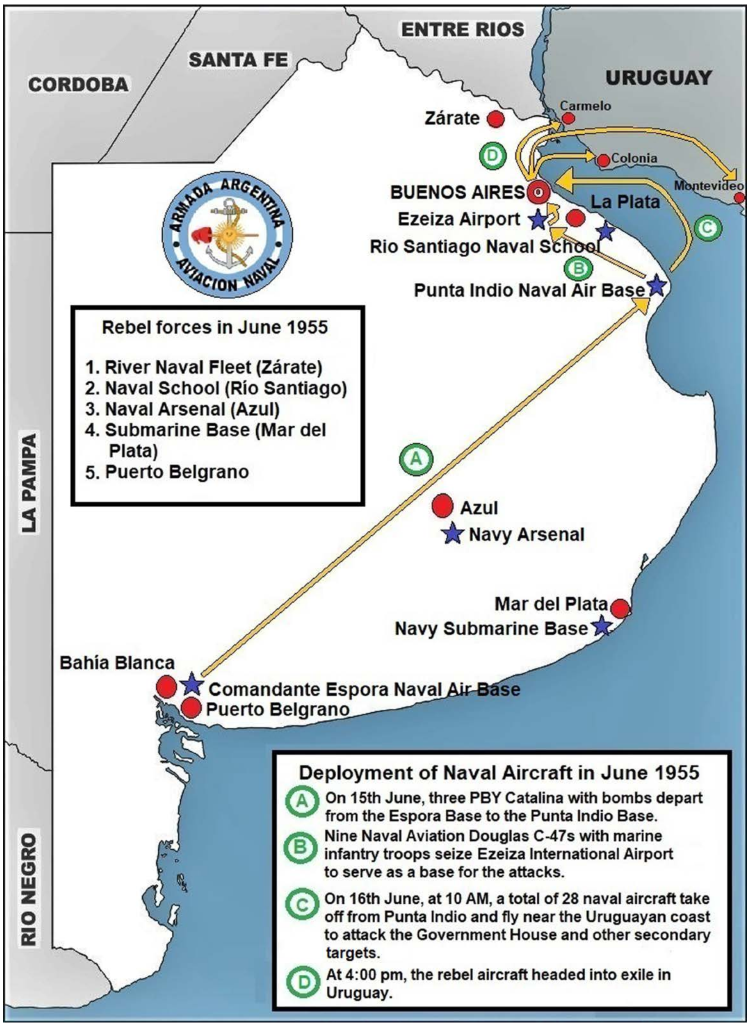
Not all the aircraft of the Naval Aviation were pressed into service by the rebels. This C-47 – the first acquired in 1947, and the former mount of the US Army Air Force that participated in the invasion of Normandy, in 1944 – was at Punta Indio Naval Air Base in June 1955. Formerly wearing the serial 2-Gt-13, as illustrated here, it was meanwhile re-serialled as 4-T-20 and pressed into service by the loyalists. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)

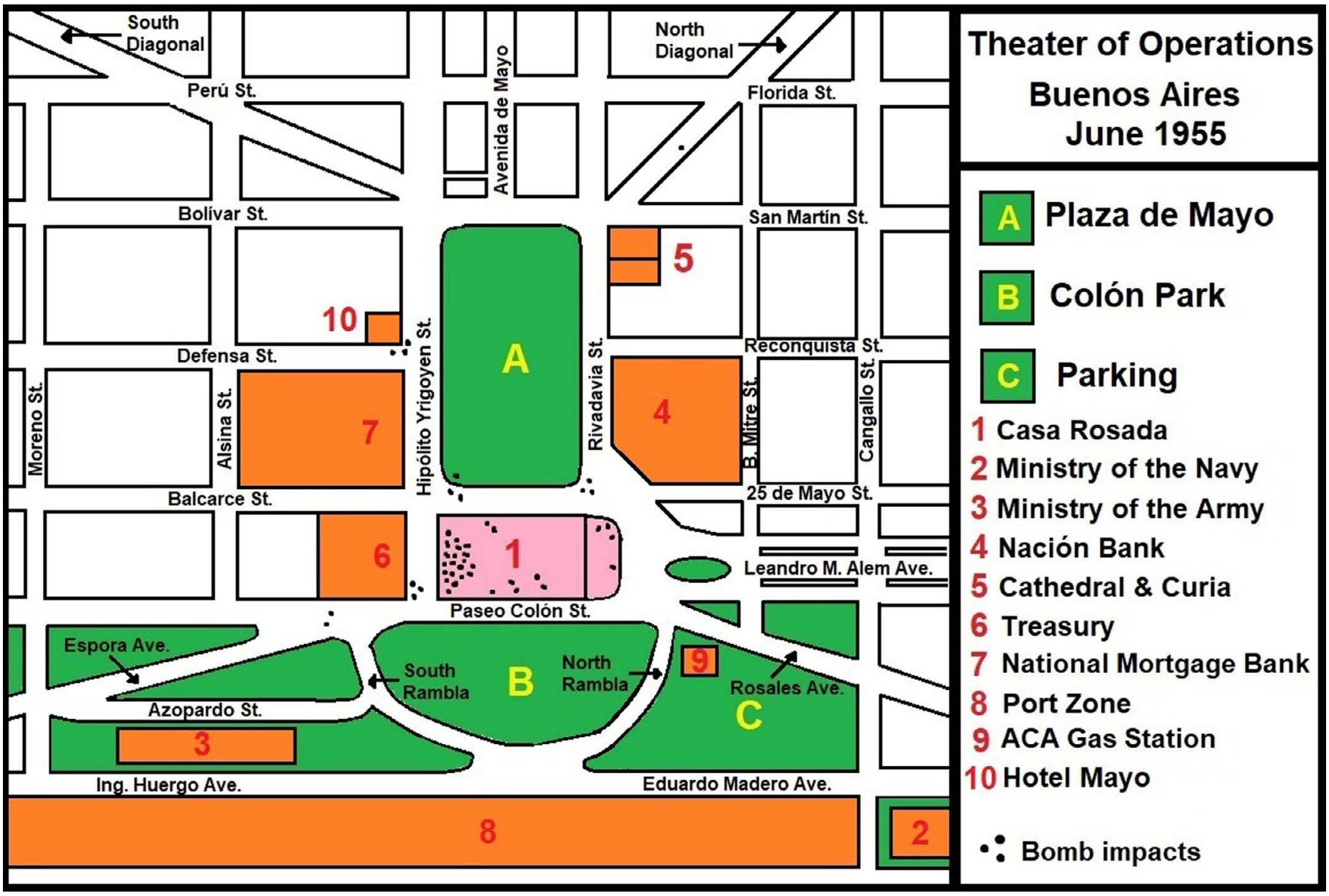


The Argentine Air Force was the first military service in the country to acquire Douglas C-54 Skymaster transports, starting in 1946. Eventually, it acquired four of this military transport variant, and six DC-4 airliners. Initially, they served with the 2nd Transport Group in Morón Air Base (VII Air Brigade), but later they were also operated by the 1st Transport Group from El Palomar Air Base (I Air Brigade). (Artwork by Tom Cooper)

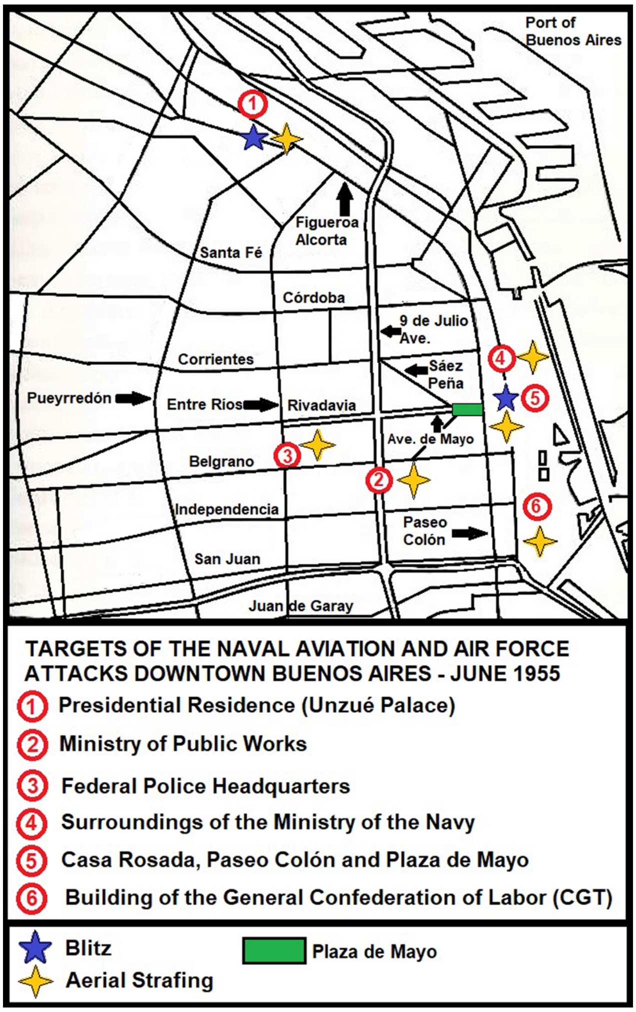


The Argentine Air Force acquired a total of 70 Fiat G.46-2 trainers, between 1948 and 1951, and they served for about 11 years with the Military Aviation School and VII Air Brigade at Morón Air Base. A few were operated by II Air Brigade for photoreconnaissance purposes, too – in which role they were flown during the events of 1955. Nominally armed with a single 7.7mm Breda-Safat machine gun installed in the right wing, all were disarmed by 1955. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)


ENTRE RIOS
SANTA FE
CORDOBA
URUGUAY
Carmelo
Zárate
Colonia
Montevideo
BUENOS AIRES
La Plata
Ezeiza Airport
Rio Santiago Naval School
Punta Indio Naval Air Base
ARMADA ARGENTINA
AVIACION NAVAL
Rebel forces in June 1955
1. River Naval Fleet (Zárate)
2. Naval School (Río Santiago)
3. Naval Arsenal (Azul)
4. Submarine Base (Mar del Plata)
5. Puerto Belgrano
LA PAMPA
A
B
C
D
Azul
Navy Arsenal
Mar del Plata
Navy Submarine Base
Bahía Blanca
Comandante Espora Naval Air Base
Puerto Belgrano
RIO NEGRO
Deployment of Naval Aircraft in June 1955
A On 15th June, three PBY Catalina with bombs depart from the Espora Base to the Punta Indio Base.
B Nine Naval Aviation Douglas C-47s with marine infantry troops seize Ezeiza International Airport to serve as a base for the attacks.
C On 16th June, at 10 AM, a total of 28 naval aircraft take off from Punta Indio and fly near the Uruguayan coast to attack the Government House and other secondary targets.
D At 4:00 pm, the rebel aircraft headed into exile in Uruguay.

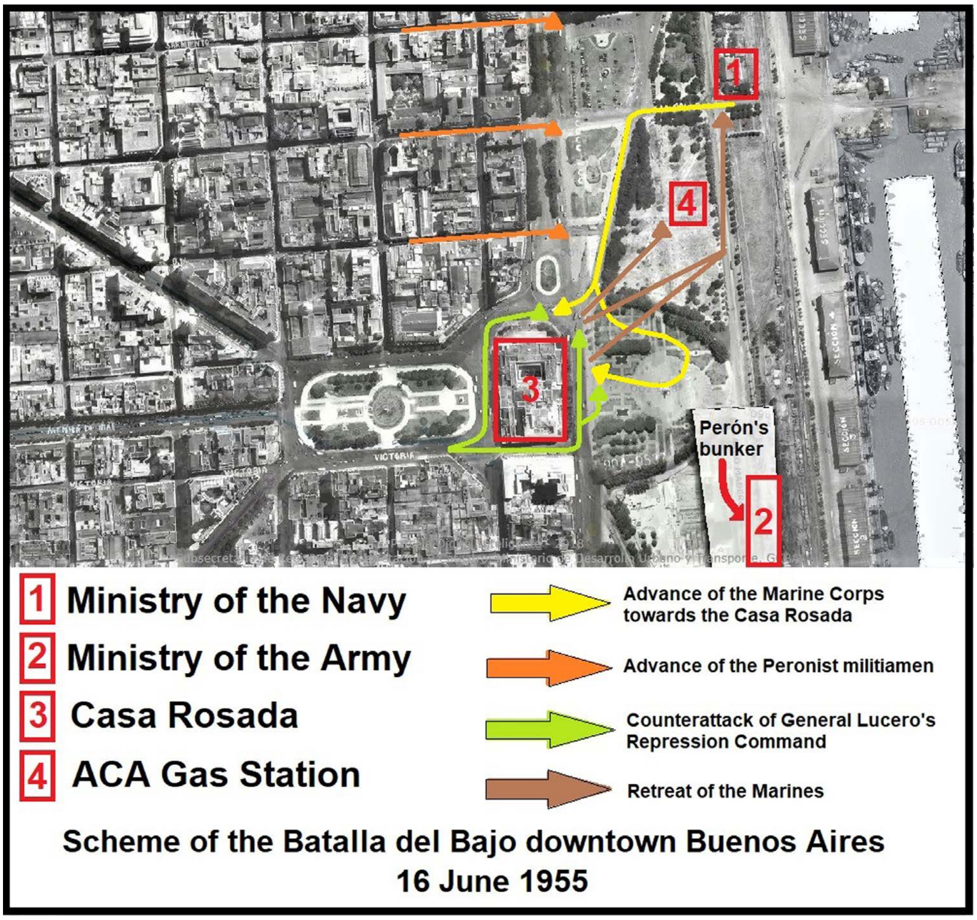

South Diagonal
North Diagonal
Perú St.
Avenida de Mayo
Florida St.
Bolívar St.
San Martín St.
5
10
A
Defensa St.
Hipólito Yrigoyen St.
Rivadavia St.
Reconquista St.
Moreno St.
Alsina St.
7
4
B. Mitre St.
Cangallo St.
Balcarce St.
25 de Mayo St.
6
1
Leandro M. Alem Ave.
Paseo Colón St.
Espora Ave.
South Rambla
B
North Rambla
9
Rosales Ave.
C
Azopardo St.
3
Ing. Huergo Ave.
Eduardo Madero Ave.
8
2
Theater of Operations
Buenos Aires
June 1955
A Plaza de Mayo
B Colón Park
C Parking
1 Casa Rosada
2 Ministry of the Navy
3 Ministry of the Army
4 Nación Bank
5 Cathedral & Curia
6 Treasury
7 National Mortgage Bank
8 Port Zone
9 ACA Gas Station
10 Hotel Mayo
Bomb impacts

(Maps by Author)



TARGETS OF THE NAVAL AVIATION AND AIR FORCE ATTACKS DOWNTOWN BUENOS AIRES - JUNE 1955

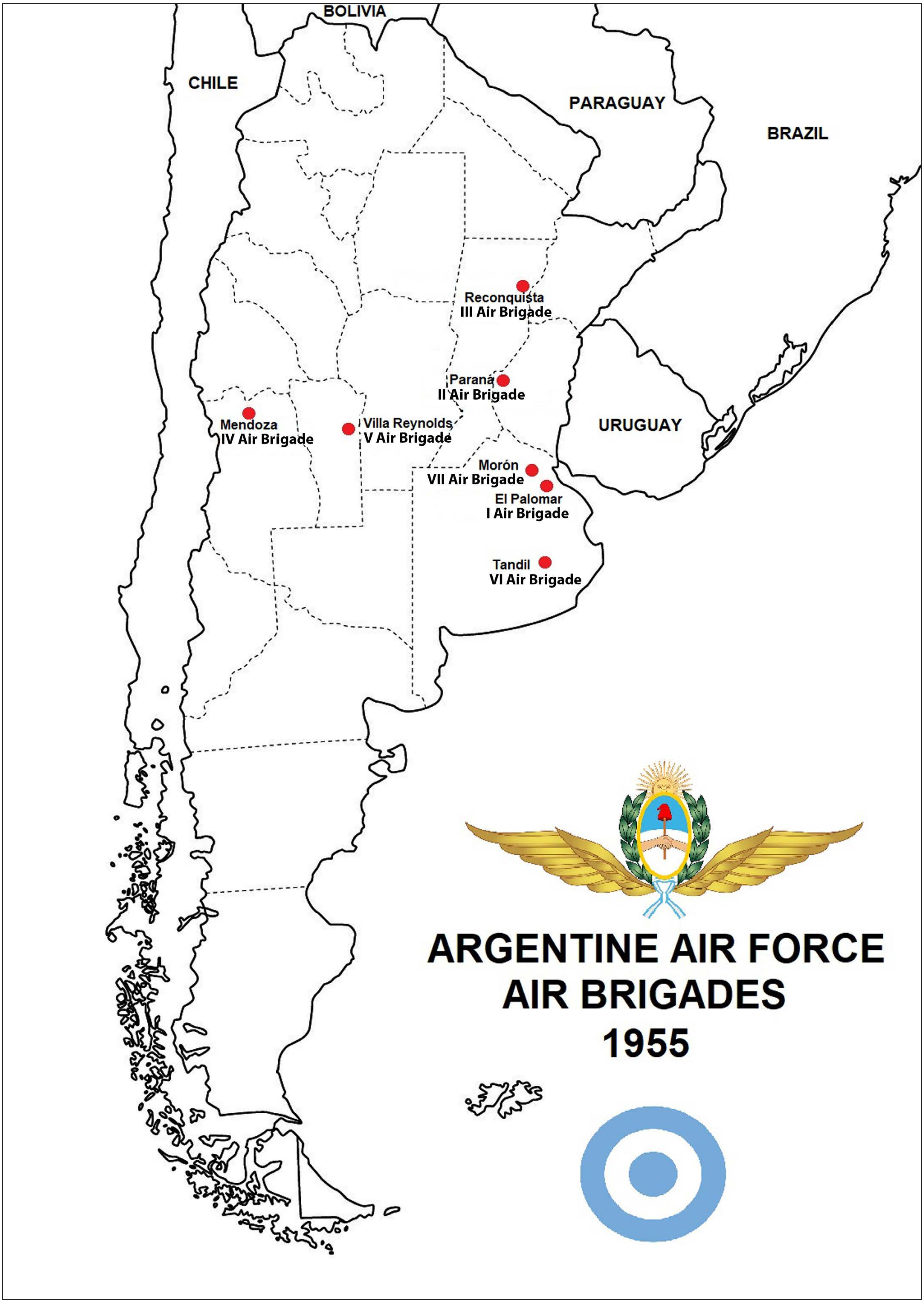
Port of Buenos Aires
①
Figueroa Alcorta
Santa Fé
Córdoba
9 de Julio Ave.
Corrientes
④
Sáez Peña
⑤
Pueyrredón
Entre Ríos
Rivadavia
Ave. de Mayo
③
Belgrano
②
⑥
Independencia
Paseo Colón
San Juan
Juan de Garay
① Presidential Residence (Unzué Palace)
② Ministry of Public Works
③ Federal Police Headquarters
④ Surroundings of the Ministry of the Navy
⑤ Casa Rosada, Paseo Colón and Plaza de Mayo
⑥ Building of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT)
★ Blitz
✦ Aerial Strafing
🟩 Plaza de Mayo



Scheme of the Batalla del Bajo downtown Buenos Aires
16 June 1955

1
4
3
Perón's bunker
2
1 Ministry of the Navy
2 Ministry of the Army
3 Casa Rosada
4 ACA Gas Station
Advance of the Marine Corps towards the Casa Rosada
Advance of the Peronist militiamen
Counterattack of General Lucero's Repression Command
Retreat of the Marines

(Maps by Author)


BOLIVIA
CHILE
PARAGUAY
BRAZIL
URUGUAY
Reconquista
III Air Brigade
Paraná
II Air Brigade
Mendoza
IV Air Brigade
Villa Reynolds
V Air Brigade
Morón
VII Air Brigade
El Palomar
I Air Brigade
Tandil
VI Air Brigade
ARGENTINE AIR FORCE
AIR BRIGADES
1955

(Map by Author)

In the Ministry of the Army, President Perón (second left) listens carefully to the report of General Sosa Molina (first right), in the company of his closest collaborators, among them the Minister of the Army General Franklin Lucero (third left). (Open source)

The building of the Ministry of the Navy, near the Casa Rosada in Buenos Aires. (Open source)

by the Army Captain Adolfo Philippeaux, in addition to the armed Peronist civilians. The Marines had to fall back.

Under the cover of the air attacks, Argerich's troops attacked the grenadiers who were defending the Casa Rosada. When trucks with reinforcements arrived, the rebels killed the conscripts who were driving them to prevent the troops from reaching their destination.

Upon learning that the Casa Rosada was under attack, thousands of workers mobilised to support loyal troops, but were attacked upon arrival by a second wave of shelling, and later suffered more casualties when they participated in the takeover of the Ministry of the Navy. On the other hand, from the terraces of the Ministry of the Army and the Casa Rosada, a curtain of machine gun fire was opened, which prevented the advance of the Marines led by Corvette Lieutenant Alejandro Spinelli Menotti, which withdrew to a YPF gas station, where they resisted for more than four hours until the final withdrawal at the end of the afternoon.

At the naval hospital, Rear Admiral Olivieri, upon being informed of the situation of the Navy attacks, decided to go personally to the Ministry of the Navy building with his assistants, Ship Lieutenants Emilio Massera and Horacio Mayorga. Loyalty to the Navy was stronger than his loyalty to Perón. Once he reached the place, he took command of all the naval troops in order to defend the building.

At 1:15 p.m., two civilian command groups whose mission was to broadcast the revolutionary proclamation by radio achieved their objective. Radio Mitre was taken over by a naval officer, Siro de Martini, at the head of a group of radical civil commandos. Once inside, they forced the announcer to read the proclamation, which read:

> Argentines, Argentines, listen to this announcement from heaven finally overturned on Argentine land. The tyrant is dead. Our homeland, from today on, is free. God be praised. Compatriots: at this time, the forces of economic, democratic and republican liberation have already finished with the tyrant. The aviation of the fatherland in the service of freedom has destroyed its refuge and the tyrant has died. Forces of the three arms identified in this patriotic action, move towards all the objectives that were set for them.
>
> Groups of elements, always responding to orders previously given and in close collaboration, fill their mission in several places of this city, receiving the fervent support of the population to the military forces. The glorious cadets of the Naval Academy and the brave sailors of the Navy Mechanics School advance from their respective garrisons accompanied by compact popular groups that cheer the revolutionary movement. Citizens, workers and students: the era of the recovery of freedom and human rights has arrived…[1]

Almost immediately, the personnel of the radio station's transmitter plant in the Hurlingham district of Buenos Aires cut the transmission.

The transmission did not help much, because at 2:00 p.m., the state radio issued a statement from President Perón himself:

Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4 interceptor fighters of the Argentine Air Force. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

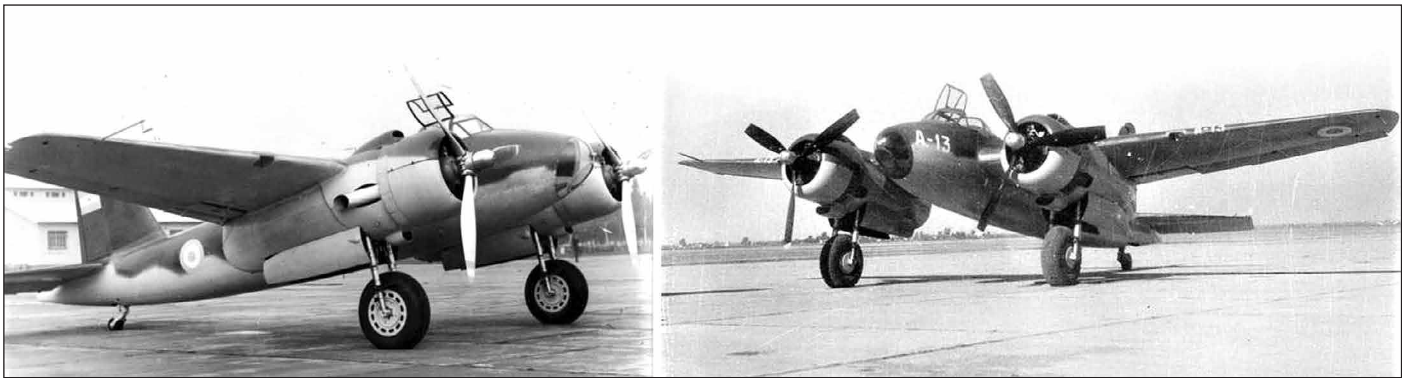
The Unzué Palace, the presidential residence of General Perón in Buenos Aires, which was subjected to air raids in June 1955. (Open source)

> Some disturbances have occurred as a result of the uprising of a part of the Naval Aviation. The army troops are acting against probable sources of disturbance of order. The Military Aviation has shot down an airplane and three have been forced to land. The situation is tending to normalize. The rest of the country is calm. Army and Aviation Forces, firm in complying with their duty…[2]

The political and military reaction to the attack was swift and forceful. The ESMA (*Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada*, Navy Mechanics School) was immediately surrounded and a column from the La Tablada Regiment, equipped with 20mm and 40mm anti-aircraft guns, was mobilised towards the Ezeiza International Airport to recapture it. The latter column was attacked by a Naval Aviation AT-6.

At 1:25 p.m., Lieutenant Carlos García Boll on board Naval Aviation Texan serial 3-A-28 led an attack with two other AT-6s for a second raid on Plaza de Mayo and the Casa Rosada, strafing and dropping 50 kilogram bombs on both targets before returning to Ezeiza to be reloaded and refuelled.

The Argentine Air Force carried out its first combat missions on 16 June against Naval Aviation aircraft. The entry on the scene by the military aviation was changing. At Morón Air Base, where the Gloster Meteor F.4 interceptor fighters were stationed, the situation was confusing, since the pilots, being loyal to the government at first, joined the rebels and participated in the attack on Plaza de Mayo and other objectives, such as the CGT building. At two in the afternoon, the rebel Air Force Commander de la Vega, supported by a large number of officers, took possession of Morón Air Base in a surprising and audacious way, arresting all loyal chiefs, officers and



I.Aé. 24 Calquín twin-engine attack/light bombers, the Argentine counterpart of the De Havilland D.H. 98 Mosquito. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina) non-commissioned officers, and locking them up in several rooms of the base under armed guard. The revolutionary officers of the base were Captains Carús, Arrechea, Correa Arce, Desimoni, Ozaita, Cimadevilla, Pedresol, Mones Ruiz, Barni and Gamas, the 1st Lieutenants Gabassi, Carpio, Ciafardini, Álvarez, Masserini, Romero, Cantisani, Fernández, Martín and González, and Lieutenants Soto, Giosa, Palacio, Jeannot, Boehler, Marelli, Petre, Guerra, Luoni, Wilkinson Almeida and Piudo. Very few NCOs joined them, but all the conscripts obeyed their orders.

President Perón and the Minister of the Army General Franklin Lucero, and the building of the Ministry of the Army, the Military Command Headquarters during the uprising. (Open source)

At 3:00 p.m., naval aircraft were ordered to take off for another attack. Three Texans participated in this operation, serials 3-A-19, 3-A-1 and 3-A-6. They bombed the Casa Rosada, receiving intense antiaircraft fire. When they returned from the attack, orders were received to evacuate Ezeiza and head to Uruguayan territory. Starting at 5:30 p.m., some 18 naval Texans began landing at Carrasco International Airport, near Montevideo, Uruguay.

In a low-level flight, a Gloster Meteor F.4 machinegunned the CGT building, killing the labour leader Héctor Passano, and they also fired on the Police Department and the Ministry of Public Works on 9 de Julio Avenue. A clerk was hit by gunfire, and he died in his office. Another Gloster loomed behind the dome of the Congress building, flying just above Avenida de Mayo, heading to Government House to machinegun it. Ezeiza, meanwhile, was being approached by effectives of La Tablada Infantry Regiment Number 3.

Since the naval pilots led by Noriega at Ezeiza thought that Perón might have hidden in his presidential residence at the Unzué Palace, a bombing raid with three Beechcraft AT-11 Kansans was dispatched, led by the plane serial 3-B-4 flown by Ship Lieutenant Carlos Fragío, followed by the ones crewed by Ship Lieutenant Jorge Irigoin and Frigate Lieutenant Alfredo Eustaquio. They found anti-aircraft fire there and all the aircraft were hit. This time, the leader attacked from one side and the other two AT-11s from that opposite, dropping their 110-kilogram bombs.

They did not get a direct hit on the palace, but they did hit the immediate vicinity, killing and wounding several civilians. Some of the bombs dropped did not explode. In addition, an apartment that President Perón owned in a nearby building at 2289 Gelly y Obes Street, which had been a gift from businessman Dodero, was also attacked. The building was not directly impacted; the bombs fell nearby, causing several civilian victims.

The perpetrators of the bombing would later affirm that the objective was not necessarily to kill the President of the Nation, but '…to break him in his strength of command.'[3]

Meanwhile, the Argentine Air Force's IV Air Brigade remained loyal to the Perón government, working intensely to put the largest number of I.Aé. 24 Calquín attack/light bomber aircraft into service to assist the constituted authorities. The head of the Tactical Air Command was Brigadier Major Félix Justo Jaureguiberry, and he made an order by telephone to the Chief of the Brigade, Commodore Eduardo Segundo Martín Allío, that the Attack Group Number 1 (A.1), with his boss at the front, leave for Villa Reynolds. Commodore Allío gathered the crews of the aircraft and told them that he was confident and sure of the success of the mission. Vice Commodore Ángel Roberto Cáceres, Head of A.1, gave the final instructions and ordered the take-off of all available machines on the afternoon of 16 June, heading to Villa Mercedes, San Luis. The return of the Calquín attack bombers occurred on 25 June.

Fighting in the City

From inside Government House and the Ministry of the Army, the loyalist side began to organise the resistance. General Lucero personally assumed the leadership of the loyal troops at 12:30 a.m., under a direct order from President Perón. At 1:15 p.m., General Lucero gave the order to go into action to all Army units, giving the following instructions:

- Firstly, he ordered Lieutenant Colonel Calmón with the Motorised Regiment 'Buenos Aires' troops to eject the Marines who were occupying the square in front of the Casa Rosada and then seize the Ministry of the Navy.
- Colonel D'Onofrío, Head of the Military House, was ordered to defend Government House with the 'General San Martín' Horse Grenadier Regiment.
- The Commander in Chief of the Army, General José Domingo Molina, established his command in the Palermo barracks of the First Motorised Division, which included the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Infantry Regiments, under the command of General Ernesto Fatigatti. He was joined by Generals Lugand and Dell'Oro. They had to neutralise the Navy Mechanics School (ESMA) and once this objective was achieved, seize the 17 de Octubre Airport in the federal capital, eliminate resistance in the port area and the Naval Arsenal, and prevent landings by the Marine Corps from the Martín García Island in the Río de la Plata.
- Meanwhile, General Robles, with the Regiment Number 3 of Motorised Infantry, had to seize Ezeiza International Airport and, with the Motorised Light Anti-aircraft Artillery Group, give antiaircraft protection to Plaza de Mayo, which was being attacked from the air.
- General Ferrazzano, Commander of the Second Army Division, with troops, had to reduce the rebel focus of the

Punta Indio Naval Air Base, under a prior agreement with Rear Admiral Rojas of the Río Santiago Base, and with the 5th Infantry Regiment of Bahía Blanca, occupy the Comandante Espora Base in Puerto Belgrano.

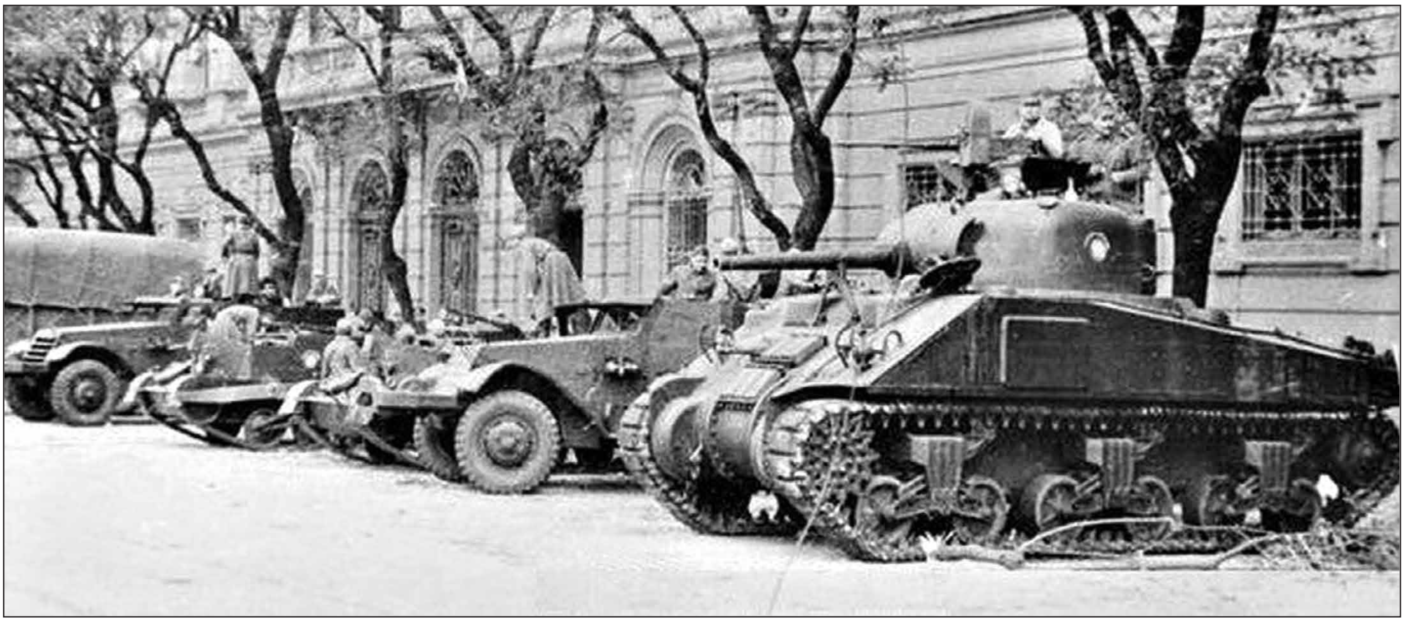
- General Salinas, Commander of the First Armoured Division, had to occupy and defend Morón Aerodrome, at the request of the Minister of Aeronautics Brigadier Major San Martín, because there had been a mutiny led by Commander de la Vega. Brigadier Daneri managed to dominate after three hours.
- Colonel Pérez Villalobos, Chief of the Mar del Plata Garrison, had to prevent the deployment of Marine Corps troops from that city to the federal capital.
- Major Cialcetta had to be in contact with the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) leaders to prevent civilians going to Plaza de Mayo during the attacks.
- Finally, he made contact with, and enlisted for combat, all the garrisons in the interior of the country which stood in solidarity with the government.

The Minister of the Army General Franklin Lucero. (Esteban Raczynski Collection)

General Ernesto Fatigati, Commander of the 1st Mechanised Infantry Division in Palermo, Buenos Aires. (Open source)

The ‘Buenos Aires’ Motorised Regiment under the command of Major Vicente advanced towards the Plazoleta Colón and located its Sherman tanks to respond to the fire of the naval troops. Despite the rebel fire, the tank crews were ordered only to advance, without opening fire with their guns. Some armed Peronist civilians followed the Shermans in support. Meanwhile, the battalion under the charge of Major San Miguel advanced towards the port quickly, without encountering resistance.

For their part, the rebel troops of Marine Infantry Battalion 4 were transported in trucks in the early afternoon and deployed around the Casa Rosada, with the intention of occupying it by force. One company took up position, across the street, 40 metres from the north esplanade, and the other took refuge in the parking lot of the Argentine Automobile Club (ACA), between Colón Park and the main Post Office building, 100 metres from the rear. The military actions there were known as the *Batalla del Bajo* (Battle of Lower Buenos Aires). However, they were repelled from the inside of the Casa Rosada by members of the Horse Grenadier Regiment and from the outside by Army troops marching from the Ministry of Finance, under direct orders from General Lucero. The defence of the Casa Rosada consisted of two 12.7mm Browning M2 machine guns located on the roof, while various light weapons were used from the lower floors, including 1909 Mauser rifles. In view of the fact that many rebel soldiers were young men in military service, they did not shoot to kill. The loyal troops were accompanied by Peronist sympathisers who took up arms. Colonel Gutierrez of the Grenadiers was in charge of defending the Casa Rosada, seconded by



A Sherman tank, M3 half-track vehicles and Universal Carriers loyal to the government. (Argentine Army)

Defenders of the Casa Rosada: a group of grenadiers posing with a Sherman tank from the Army (left), and members of the Gendarmerie amid the rubble of Government House (right). (Open source)

Lieutenant Colonel Goulú, who ordered Captain Virgilio Aldo Di Paolo to prepare the defence system of the place. There were only four officers, five non-commissioned officers and 38 soldiers. During the fighting against the rebels, there were several casualties, especially in the sections deployed on the roofs of the Casa Rosada, when they were attacked by the Naval Aviation. At the end of the day, nine fatalities were counted among the defenders of Government House.

At 1:12 p.m., the union leader Héctor Hugo Di Pietro, who was in charge of the CGT due to the absence of the Secretary General, spoke on the national radio broadcasting network and called on all workers in the Federal Capital and Greater Buenos Aires to concentrate immediately around the CGT to defend their leader. Meanwhile, union delegates were mobilising workers from the factories around Buenos Aires to the centre of the city.

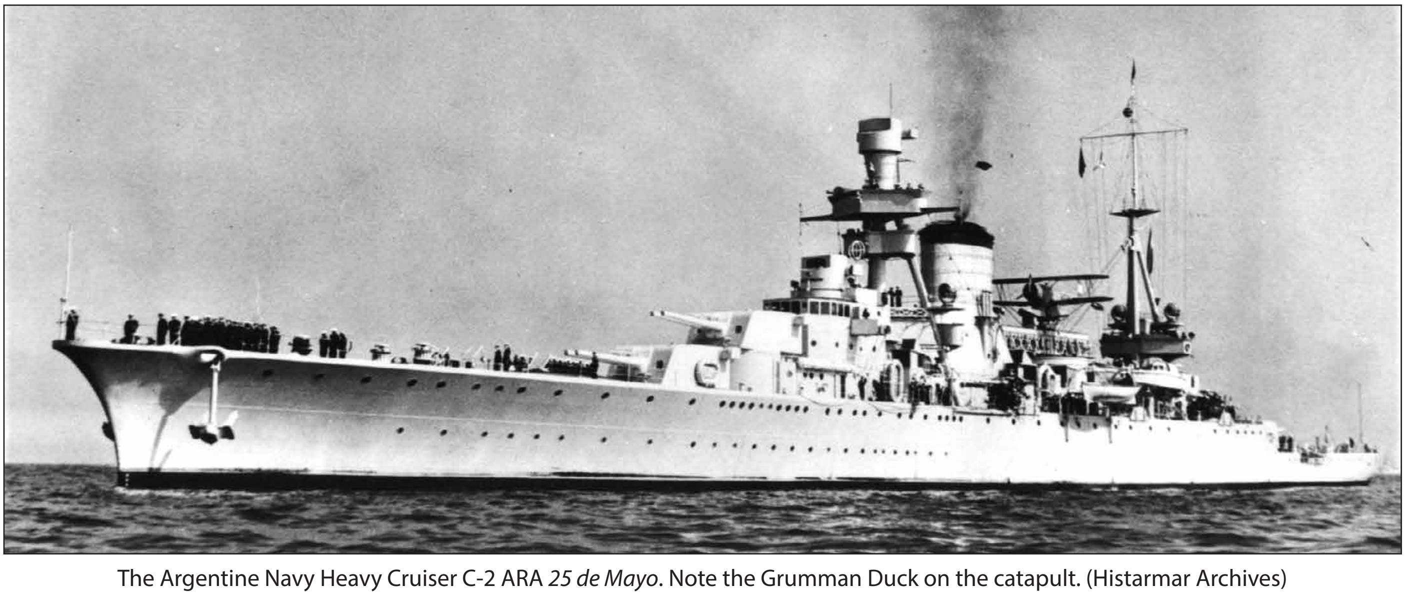
Perón ordered his assistant, Major Cialcetta, to inform Di Pietro that not a single man should attend the Plaza de Mayo, since it was 'a confrontation between soldiers.' According to a report from the US Embassy, that order was not issued until 4:00 p.m.[4]

Meanwhile, the civilians summoned by the CGT and by the leaders of the Nationalist Liberation Alliance (ALN) were concentrated in the north-western sector of the square and the Ministry of War, and they also fired on the rebels. A doctor who was passing through the square ran to the Casa Rosada, despite the danger of becoming a victim of the bombing, and spent several hours treating the wounded while the events unfolded.

Regiment Number 3 of Motorised Infantry, with 20mm and 40mm Oerlikon and Bofors anti-aircraft pieces, repelled an attack of the Naval Aviation and then marched towards Government House in two groups commanded by Artillery Captains Haurie and Scartascini. Once there, they repelled several air attacks against the area. At the same time, other troops from the Motorised Regiment Number 3 under the command of General Robles, together with Lieutenant Colonel Arrechea, advanced towards Ezeiza International Airport, being attacked by the Naval Aviation during the deployment. Since they had no anti-aircraft weapons, all they could do was get off the road and take cover on the ground. Finally, upon arrival, several aircraft took off from Ezeiza carrying all the rebel naval officers, leaving about 170 NCOs and Marines in that place, who almost immediately raised a white flag as a sign of surrender, so that no fighting took place.

The dominant position of the rebels began to reverse before 3:00 in the afternoon. The artillery had their barracks in a building located on the corner of Leandro N. Alem Street and Viamonte Street, from where they could attack the infantrymen who were standing in front of the north esplanade of the Casa Rosada. Rear Admiral Olivieri contacted the Navy Mechanics School in search of reinforcements, but it was too late for it to turn to the uprising, as it was surrounded by effectives of Regiment Number 1 of Palermo.

In addition, General Ernesto Fatigatti had met with the ESMA Commander, Captain Adolfo Cordeu, and agreed that the troops



The Argentine Navy Heavy Cruiser C-2 ARA *25 de Mayo*. Note the Grumman Duck on the catapult. (Histarmar Archives) under his command would not leave that base, to avoid further bloodshed.

Commander Argerich ordered a general withdrawal, faced with the superiority of fire from the loyal troops. The company under the charge of Lieutenant Sommariva and the machine gun section of Lieutenant Montiquín retreated first to the corner of Paseo Colón. In this operation, they had no casualties, retreating first to the Central Post Office building and then to the Ministry of the Navy. The company under the charge of Lieutenant Spinelli was isolated, withstanding intense fire from all sides. The approach of two naval Beech AT-11s that bombed the area saved the Marines from being annihilated. In the meantime, Minister Olivieri, already at the Ministry of the Navy building and after being informed of the situation, took command of the revolutionary operations. The Ministry of the Navy building, with its large windows and hollow brick walls, was not prepared to withstand heavy attacks and bullets passed through the walls without problems. This building was attacked by loyal troops from the Ministry of the Army, the Casa Rosada and from various points in the vicinity.

Meanwhile, from the 'Red Base' at Ezeiza International Airport, several DC-3s and DC-4s were dispatched to various naval bases in the province of Buenos Aires, in order to bring the largest possible number of Marines to reinforce the uprising. At 2:00 p.m., two DC-3s, piloted by the Ship Lieutenant Aracama and Frigate Lieutenant Ventureira, landed on the Azopardo Naval Arsenal runway in the town of Azul. They were immediately received by the Chief of the Arsenal, Commander Carlos Brañas, who flatly refused to give up his troops for the uprising. Lieutenant Aracama and Captain Brañas fought each other and the local troops immediately came to their chief's defence, so both DC-3 aircraft had to take off empty. Aracama's aeroplane flew directly into exile in Uruguay, while the other one returned to Ezeiza. Three DC-3s that landed at the Mar del Plata submarine base also failed to embark the Marines and had to leave empty. Two DC-4s landed at the Comandante Espora Base near Bahía Blanca, but their commander, Admiral Ignacio Chamorro, loyal to the government, ordered that these aircraft be detained. However, their pilots did not comply with the order and took off again, also empty.

The commander of the Sea Fleet in Puerto Belgrano, Vice Admiral Juan B. Basso, who had received orders to mobilise the warships, was instructed by Admiral Piva not to do so, since those orders were false. The rebels could not count on the support of important naval detachments, so the failure of the uprising was imminent. A senior naval officer, the Commander of the Naval Academy, Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas, remained neutral during the June uprising, but was to be a key figure in September, as will be seen later.

Meanwhile, the rebel civil commandos went into action under the command of the radical Miguel Ángel Zavala Ortiz, harassing the loyalists, confronting the police and firing like snipers from the roofs of what was then the Banco Nación building. They also occupied various radio stations to broadcast a revolutionary proclamation. Peronist civilian workers, at the call of the CGT leadership, flocked to Plaza de Mayo and requested weapons to defend their leader. In reality, troops loyal to the government were hampered by this crowd in their operations; this will be seen later.

Minister General Lucero ordered a joint attack with 80mm mortars from Government House and the Ministry of the Army. At 3:17 p.m., after two telephone conversations between Olivieri and Lucero, the rebels waved a white flag from the Ministry of the Navy, but when Generals Carlos Wirth and Juan José Valle arrived in a jeep at the building to speak with the besieged, a second wave of bombings began, more prolonged and heavy than the previous one. The attack destroyed two floors of the south wing of the building and killed a soldier and an officer. An M4 Sherman tank fired on the second floor of the Admiralty Office, causing a hole and a fire in the Admirals' Room.

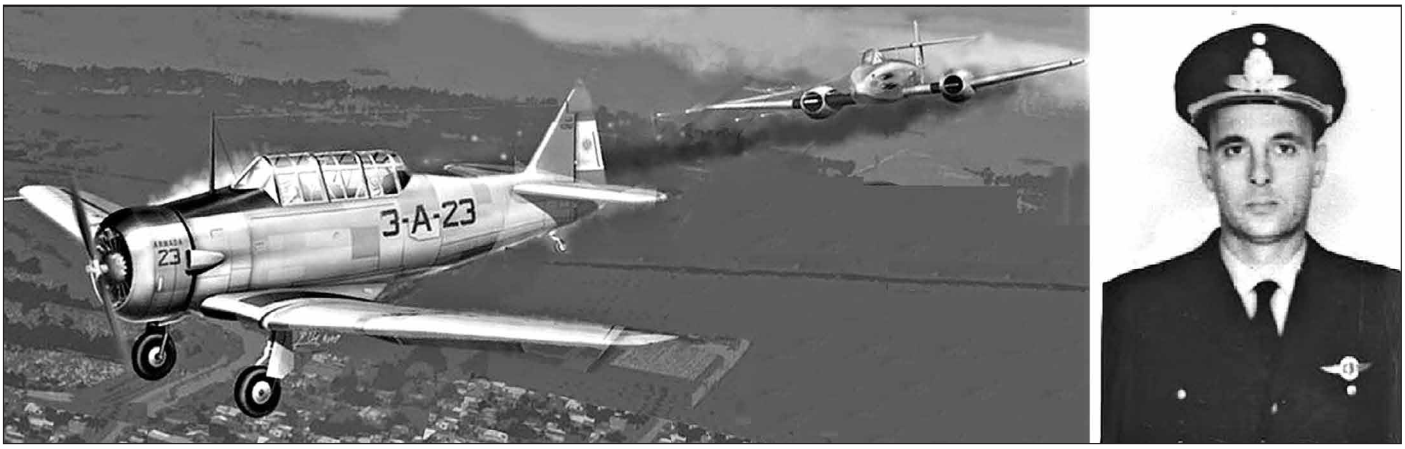
Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas, Commander of the Naval Academy, neutral in June but a key figure in September. (Open source)

The rebels feared that the loyalist forces could not control the Peronist militants and did not want to risk the rebellion ending with a lynching. While the Navy negotiated the terms of the surrender, Noriega made the decision to send a Douglas DC-3 from Ezeiza to the Morón Brigade to evacuate the conspirators who were still in combat against the official forces. Some of the Gloster Meteors also managed to take off and while flying to Uruguay, they machinegunned the Casa Rosada. By then, from the Morón and Ezeiza bases, 36 planes with 122 coup leaders had fled to Uruguay. One of them was the radical Zavala Ortiz. In a later statement, the UCR reported that the bombing was the corollary of Perón's policies. He exalted the guilt of the President but omitted mentioning that of the naval power. Several conspirators were arrested, including Rafael Videla, Suárez Mason, Bignone, Díaz Bessone, Harguindeguy, Menéndez, Montes, Riveros, Nicolaides, Suárez Nelson, Villareal, Vañek, Etchecolatz, Guañabens, and Lambruschini.

Fight in the Air

Naval Air Squadron Number 3 (EAN3) commanded by Lieutenant Commander Osvaldo Guaita and equipped with five Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan aircraft, left for the government palace at 12:25 p.m.

The leading Kansan was serial 3-B-3, and was equipped with two 110-kilogram bombs, as were the other planes in the squadron. The leading aircraft was piloted by Frigate Lieutenant Commander Jorge Imaz Iglesias, whose bomb fuses were manually activated by his crew, and was the first to drop bombs, hitting a trolleybus and killing all its occupants instantly and also hitting the stairs in front of the Casa Rosada. The second naval Kansan, serial 3-B-4 piloted by



A graphic representation of the shooting down of the rebel Naval Aviation North American T-6 serial 0352/3-A-23 by the Meteor serial I-063 loyal to the government on 16 June 1955. Air Force Lieutenant Ernesto Adradás, the pilot of I-063, is shown on the right. (Alborno Z. Graphics)

Ship Lieutenant Carlos Fraguío reached its objective and dropped its bombs. The other three AT-11s followed one by one in the attack.

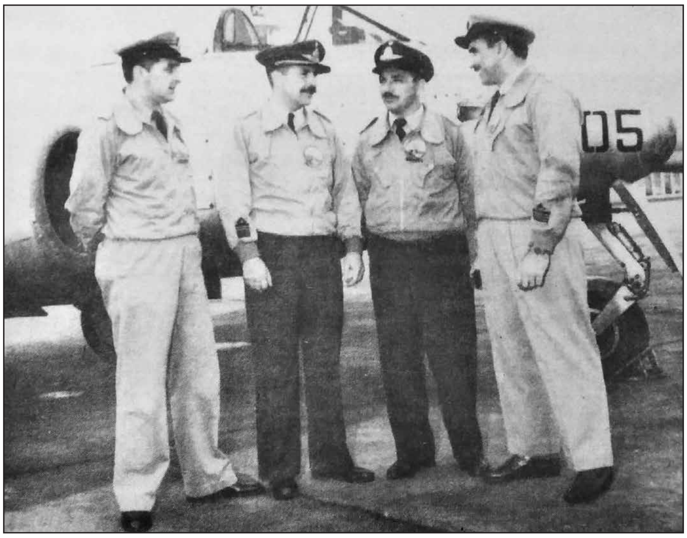
While the fire raged in downtown Buenos Aires, the loyal command ordered Morón Air Base to have jet interceptors take off. The pilots were then in heated discussions about whether or not they should join the revolutionary movement. A group of four Gloster Meteors loyal to the government quickly took to the air. Although they could not arrive in time to prevent the bombardment, they managed to intercept a rebel naval group that was withdrawing from the area.

The loyal Meteor interceptors were made up of 1st Lieutenant Juan García (flying I-039, in command), Lieutenant Ernesto Adradas (I-063, who shot down a Naval Aviation AT-6), 1st Lieutenant Mario Olezza (I-077) and 1st Lieutenant Mario Rosito (I-090) in the first action in defence of the Río de la Plata. They gathered over Plaza de Mayo in order to patrol the zone. For their part, the rebel AT-6 Texans were piloted by Corvette Lieutenant Máximo Rivero Kelly (0342/3-A-29), Midshipman Armando Román (0352/3-A-23, shot down), Lieutenant Commander Santiago Sabarots, Ship Lieutenants Héctor Florido, Eduardo Velarde, Tomás Orsi; Frigate Lieutenants Alfredo MacDougall, Raúl Robito, Heriberto Frind, Carlos García Boll, Corvette Lieutenants José M. Huergo, Julio Cano, José de Demartini, Eduardo Invierno, Luis Suárez; Midshipmen Arnaldo Román, César Dennehy, Eduardo Bisso (shot down near Ezeiza), Héctor Cordero, Sergio Rodríguez, Horacio Estrada and Juan Romanella.

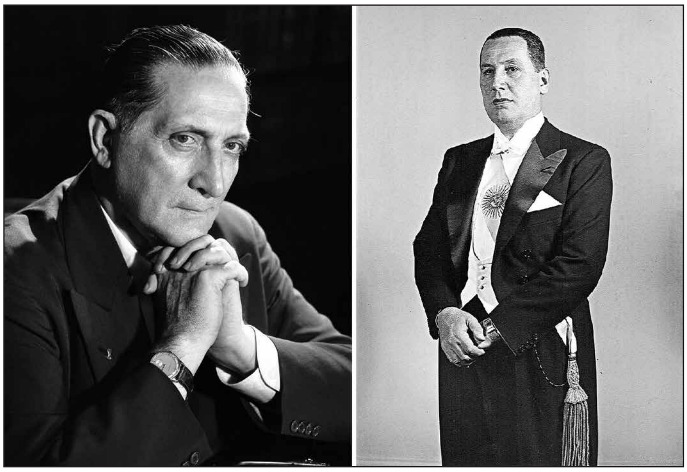
The combat took place low over the 17 de Octubre Airport and the Río de la Plata. After confirming their orders with Comodoro Soto and Brigadier Daneri, the Meteors attacked a pair of naval AT-6s. Initially, 1st Lieutenants Olezza and Rosito attacked but to no avail. Then the AT-6A Texan serial 0352/3-A-23 crewed by Midshipman Arnaldo Román fell under the 20mm guns of Lieutenant Adradás, but Román was able to bail out, fell into the river and was later rescued by a motorboat of the Coast Guard (*Prefectura Naval*). Adradás achieved the first shootdown of the Argentine Air Force, and the first shootdown of a jet aircraft in the American continent, being the first air combat of the force. Meanwhile, the Naval Aviation AT-6B serial 0342/3-A-29 flown by Corvette Lieutenant Rivero Kelly, through evasive manoeuvres, flying very low above a train, was able to escape to Ezeiza International Airport where some other Naval Aviation aircraft had gathered. When Lieutenant Adradás landed in Morón, he was effusively congratulated by Vice Commodore Sister, telling him that for this action, the government would give him a car. Minutes later Lieutenant Rodolfo Guerra approached him and whispered in his ears that he was a son of a bitch and that he would be killed for what he did. As a consequence of that, Lieutenant Adradás hid and later was able to leave the base undetected.

Top: Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4 interceptor fighters of the Argentine Air Force at Morón Air Base in the 1950s. (Vladimiro Cettolo Collection). Bottom: El Palomar Air Base in 1950. Numerous transport aircraft can be seen, including nine Junkers Ju.52, 16 Douglas C-47, 3 Douglas DC-4, some Bristol Freighters and Beechcraft C-45, and other smaller aircraft. (Walter M. Bentancor Collection)

In the second defensive action, this time over Ezeiza International Airport, a single Meteor (I-052) crewed by Vice Commodore Carlos Sister was used to attack the temporary rebel base at that airport, where 12 AT-6s, one Catalina, two C-47s and one AT-11 had been stationed. At the precise moment that the Texan serial 3-A-29 crewed by Corvette Lieutenant Máximo Rivero Kelly landed, Vice Commodore Sister's Meteor reached Ezeiza and spotted the rebel aircraft, which were attacked with its 20mm guns, damaging the AT-11 serial 3-B-11 and two commercial aircraft, a Douglas DC-4



Argentine Air Force pilots of the VII Air Brigade posing with a Gloster Meteor F.MK 4. From left to right: 1st Lieutenant Van Thienen, Commodore Correa, Captain Mones Ruiz and Captain Carús. (Author's collextion)



The Vice-President Admiral (Ret.) Alberto Tessaire (left) and President Lieutenant General Juan Domingo Perón (right). (Open source)

of Aerolineas Argentinas and a SAS Douglas DC-6B. In the case of the SAS DC-6B, the pressurisation system that was damaged in the attack, and it had to return to Europe flying below 3,000 metres.

When Sister landed in Morón, the base had fallen into rebel hands under Commander Agustín de la Vega and he was arrested, although he managed to escape and hid in a closet. The Meteors were then taken over by the revolutionaries. The first rebel operation ordered by Commander de la Vega with the Meteors was carried out by I-019 flown by Lieutenant Juan Boehler, I-094 by Lieutenant Carpio and I-036 by Lieutenant Goliarderes. Their targets were the Belgrano Radio Station antennas, which were issuing government communications. The pilots then returned to Morón and boarded other Meteors that were already refuelled and loaded with ammunition, taking off again to continue attacking Plaza de Mayo, in support of the Marines stationed in the area of the Ministry of the Navy, which caused several military and civil casualties. The Air Force planes, along with all those from the Navy, carried out that second attack on the Casa Rosada when the rest of the uprising was on the verge of failure: all the rebels were in the Ministry of the Navy, surrounded by much superior forces. President Perón was visibly shocked to see planes, from the air force that he had created, rising up against him.

A second naval AT-6, serial 3-A-22, was shot down, which was being piloted by Midshipman Eduardo Bisso. He had attacked the Infantry Regiment Number 3 of La Tablada and then a column of loyal Army troops heading to Ezeiza. Three soldiers were killed in these attacks and six others were seriously injured. It was hit by anti-aircraft fire and Bisso was forced to bail out. The Texan crashed in the Tristán Suárez area and it was destroyed. The pilot was apprehended by the police.

In the third defensive action, the crew of the four Meteors, Captain Jorge Mones Ruiz, Lieutenant Roberto Camblor, 1st Lieutenant Juan C. Carpio, and 1st Lieutenant Reynaldo Goliarderes, avoided going into combat. In fact, the Squad Chief, Captain Mones Ruiz and 1st Lieutenant Carpio were part of the group of conspiring officers.

At 2:00 p.m., due to the difficulties in radio communications between the air base in Morón and Ezeiza International Airport, an Air Force Fiat G.46-2B armed advanced trainer, crewed by Captain Carlos Carús, was sent to Ezeiza to organise a second joint attack. Once there, Captain Carús met with the naval chiefs. At the same time, a Meteor crewed by Captain Orlando Arrechea reported that many Army armoured vehicles were heading to Morón, so the alarm was immediately given.

At 3:05 p.m., naval AT-6s, AT-11s and PBY-5A Catalinas at Ezeiza, and Gloster Meteors at Morón were ready for a massive attack on the Casa Rosada, the Ministry of the Army and the surroundings of the Ministry of the Navy, in order to help the revolutionaries there. The attacking aircraft received intense anti-aircraft fire from Oerlikon

Armed Fiat G.46 advanced trainers of the Argentine Air Force. (Atilio Marino Collection via Vladimiro Cettolo) and Bofors batteries and heavy machine guns. The leader of the naval aircraft was the AT-11 serial 3-B-3. The sequence was exactly the same as the first attack: first the AT-11s, then the AT-6s and finally the Catalinas. The Catalina serial 2-P-9 commanded by Ship Lieutenant Vélez was hit by anti-aircraft fire in its left wing, opening a large hole, but could continue flying. One of its crew members, the radio operator Second Corporal Carlos P. Sigot, was wounded. Several attacking aircraft were hit by anti-aircraft fire, but since the ammunition was not explosive, but rather armour-piercing, the damage was not serious. No other crew member was injured. A total of 33 bombs hit the Casa Rosada, of which eight did not detonate. A bomb fell and detonated near the Belgrano monument, causing several victims among the CGT members stationed there. The AT-11s and Catalinas returned to Ezeiza, but the AT-6s and Meteors remained in the area strafing the loyal troops in the Ministry of the Navy's surroundings. This second massive attack by the revolutionaries emotionally impacted President Perón in his refuge in the Army Ministry. He had thought the rebellion was already under control, and while he was not surprised by the Naval Aviation attack, but he was depressed by the fact that Air Force Meteors were also involved. Brigadier Juan Ignacio San Martín at that time, trying to lessen the role of the Air Force in the uprising, told the President that the jets were manned by naval pilots, which was not true.

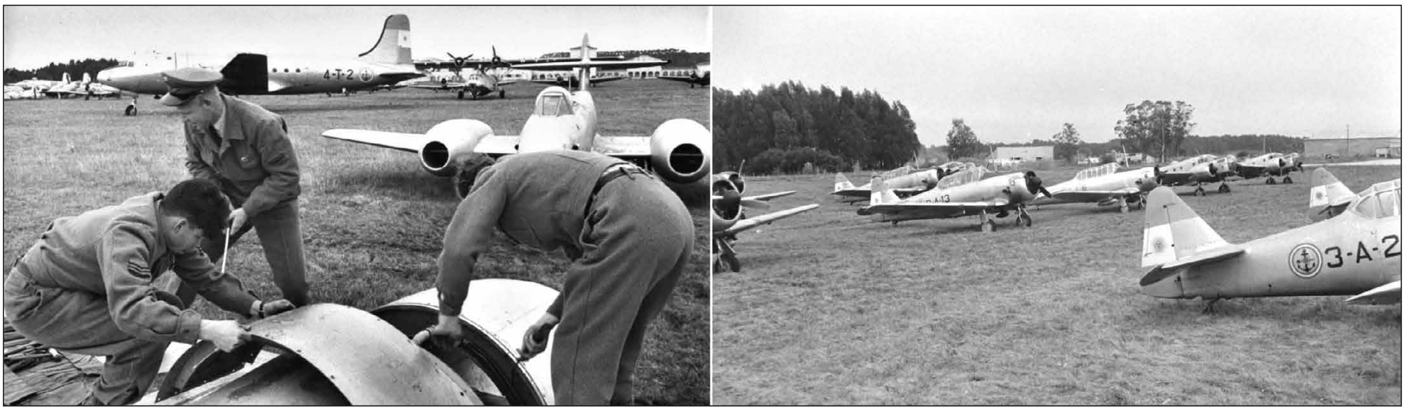
Meanwhile, civilian supporters of the government flocked to the area of the bombing and ground fighting, armed with clubs and a few with weapons. On the way there, they looted some gun shops and went to the Ministry of the Navy, naively thinking that they could take it by force.

Withdrawal and surrender

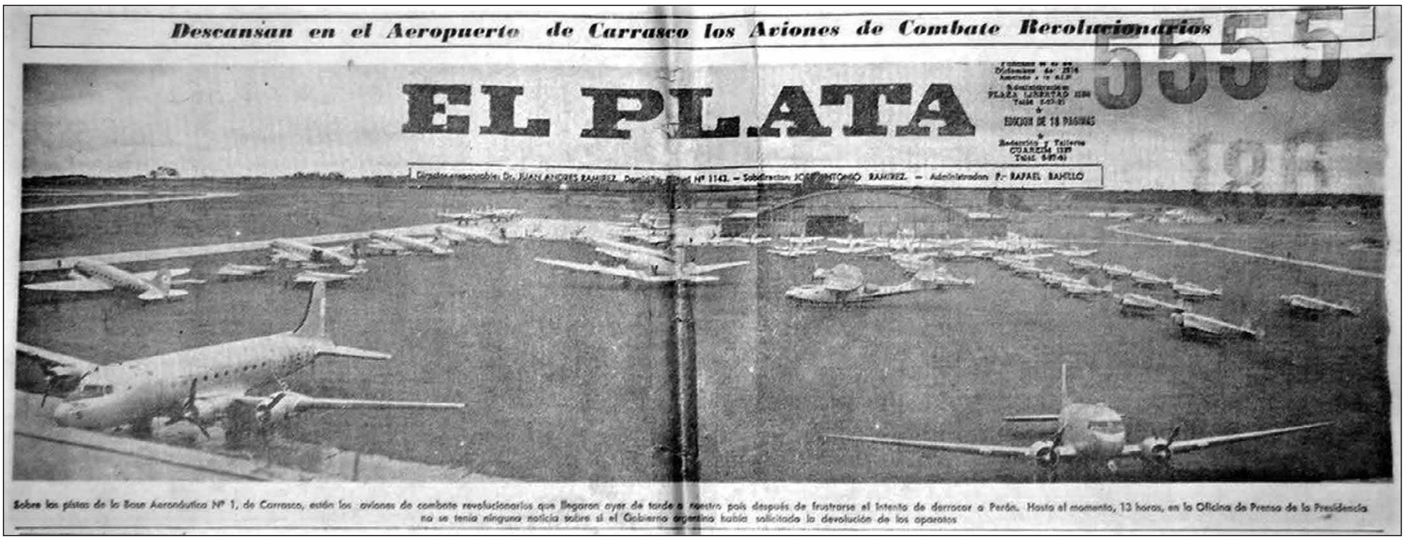
Faced with the failure of the combat on the ground and after two of their aircraft being shot down, one by the anti-aircraft batteries mounted in the area, and the other in the air, the rebel pilots received the order to flee to Uruguay and request asylum.

The rebel planes crossed the Río de la Plata towards Carrasco Airport to seek refuge in the neighbouring country. On the way they machinegunned everything that was moving in the Plaza de Mayo. The Naval Aviation Douglas C-47A serial 0117/4-T-20 crewed by Lieutenant Ventureira managed to take off from Morón Air Base to Uruguay, transporting most of the rebel pilots. Some loyal ground crews at that base tried to prevent the C-47 taking off, firing the guns of a Meteor, but to no avail.

Given the far superior loyalist forces surrounding the Ministry of the Navy, around 3:00 p.m., a white sheet was unfolded from one of the windows, in surrender. Olivieri and Lucero had spoken on the phone to stop the fighting. The naval officials asked that the Army occupy the building and not the armed civilians, in order to avoid a massacre. When apparently everything was agreed, the second attack by naval aircraft occurred, not only against the Casa Rosada but also the CGT building, the federal police building and the Ministry of Public Works on 9 de Julio Avenue. Olivieri tried to get in touch with Ezeiza and the School of Mechanics of the Navy, in order to suspend the air strikes, to no avail.



A collection of rebel aircraft in Uruguay after the failed June 1955 uprising. On the left, Air Force Gloster Meteor jets, a Navy Catalina and a DC-4. On the right are Navy North American Texan and Beechcraft AT-11 armed trainers. (Life Magazine)



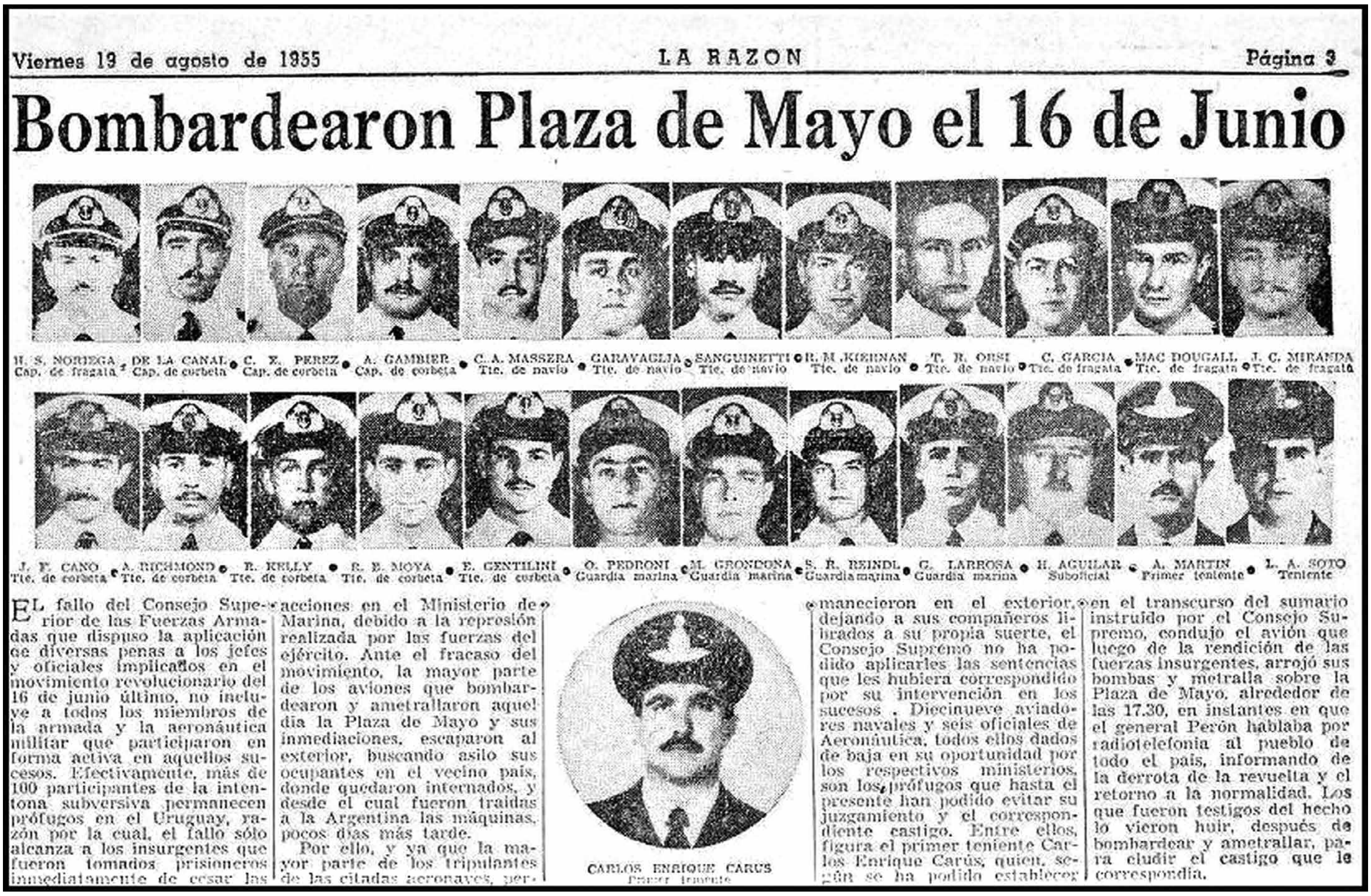
Descansan en el Aeropuerto de Carrasco los Aviones de Combate Revolucionarios

EL PLATA

EDICION DE 18 PAGINAS

Sobre las pistas de la Base Aeronáutica Nº 1, de Carrasco, están los aviones de combate revolucionarios que llegaron ayer de tarde a nuestro país después de frustrarse el intento de derrocar a Perón. Hasta el momento, 13 horas, en la Oficina de Prensa de la Presidencia no se tenía ninguna noticia sobre si el Gobierno argentino había solicitado la devolución de los aparatos

A clipping from the newspaper *El Plata*, from Montevideo in Uruguay, on 17 June 1955, showing a panoramic photograph of all the revolutionary aircraft that landed at Aeronautical Base Number 1 of the Uruguayan Air Force at Carrasco International Airport. (Diario El Plata)



Viernes 19 de agosto de 1955 LA RAZON Página 3

Bombardearon Plaza de Mayo el 16 de Junio

H. S. NORIEGA	Cap. de fragata
DE LA CANAL	Cap. de corbeta
C. E. PEREZ	Cap. de corbeta
A. GAMBIER	Cap. de corbeta
C. A. MASSERA	Tte. de navío
GARAVAGLIA	Tte. de navío
SANGUINETTI	Tte. de navío
R. M. KIERNAN	Tte. de navío
T. R. ORSI	Tte. de navío
C. GARCIA	Tte. de fragata
MAC DOUGALL	Tte. de fragata
J. C. MIRANDA	Tte. de fragata
J. F. CANO	Tte. de corbeta
A. RICHMOND	Tte. de corbeta
R. KELLY	Tte. de corbeta
R. E. MOYA	Tte. de corbeta
E. GENTILINI	Tte. de corbeta
O. PEDRONI	Guardia marina
M. GRONDONA	Guardia marina
S. R. REINDL	Guardiamarina
G. LARROSA	Guardia marina
H. AGUILAR	Suboficial
A. MARTIN	Primer teniente
L. A. SOTO	Teniente

EL fallo del Consejo Superior de las Fuerzas Armadas que dispuso la aplicación de diversas penas a los jefes y oficiales implicados en el movimiento revolucionario del 16 de junio último, no incluye a todos los miembros de la armada y la aeronáutica militar que participaron en forma activa en aquellos sucesos. Efectivamente, más de 100 participantes de la intentona subversiva permanecen prófugos en el Uruguay, razón por la cual, el fallo sólo alcanza a los insurgentes que fueron tomados prisioneros inmediatamente de cesar las acciones en el Ministerio de Marina, debido a la represión realizada por las fuerzas del ejército. Ante el fracaso del movimiento, la mayor parte de los aviones que bombardearon y ametrallaron aquel día la Plaza de Mayo y sus inmediaciones, escaparon al exterior, buscando asilo sus ocupantes en el vecino país, donde quedaron internados, y desde el cual fueron traídas a la Argentina las máquinas, pocos días más tarde.

Por ello, y ya que la mayor parte de los tripulantes de las citadas aeronaves, permanecieron en el exterior, dejando a sus compañeros librados a su propia suerte, el Consejo Supremo no ha podido aplicarles las sentencias que les hubiera correspondido por su intervención en los sucesos . Diecinueve aviadores navales y seis oficiales de Aeronáutica, todos ellos dados de baja en su oportunidad por los respectivos ministerios, son los prófugos que hasta el presente han podido evitar su juzgamiento y el correspondiente castigo. Entre ellos, figura el primer teniente Carlos Enrique Carús, quien, según se ha podido establecer en el transcurso del sumario instruido por el Consejo Supremo, condujo el avión que luego de la rendición de las fuerzas insurgentes, arrojó sus bombas y metralla sobre la Plaza de Mayo, alrededor de las 17.30, en instantes en que el general Perón hablaba por radiotelefonía al pueblo de todo el país, informando de la derrota de la revuelta y el retorno a la normalidad. Los que fueron testigos del hecho lo vieron huir, después de bombardear y ametrallar, para eludir el castigo que le correspondía.

CARLOS ENRIQUE CARUS
Primer teniente

The Buenos Aires newspaper *La Razón*, in its edition on Friday, 19 August 1955, published the list of rebel pilots from the Air Force and the Naval Aviation who crewed the aircraft that bombed Plaza de Mayo. (*La Razón*)

Argentine Air Force and Naval Aviation crews, interned in Uruguay, after requesting political asylum. (Life Magazine)

As a result of the second attack, the CGT leadership made a call through the state radio station to all the workers of the Federal Capital and Greater Buenos Aires to immediately gather around the CGT building for instructions. Numerous members of the *Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista* (ALN) under the leadership of Guillermo Patricio Kelly also went there. Among its members was a group of Ustash, anti-communist Croat émigrés, who had been recruited by the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) in the invasion of the Balkans during the Second World War, and they had combat experience. The Peronist workers did not have any military training and did not obey any chain of command, finding themselves in the crossfire between the Army and Navy Ministries. When President Perón found out, he issued a counter-order to the union leadership for the workers not to approach the combat zone. Despite this counter-order, some thousands of workers began arriving in the area around 4:00 p.m., many on foot or in trucks. This resulted in more fatalities and injuries from the machine-gunning and bombardment by the rebel aviation.

Shortly before 4:00 p.m., the naval aviator chiefs Noriega, Bassi, Guaita and Sabarots analysed the situation. Commander Sabarots, aboard an AT-6, had explored the surroundings of Ezeiza and discovered that a large number of loyal troops were approaching the airport. Noriega decided to end the uprising with a third attack, which was launched at 4:20 p.m., machine-gunning and bombing the same targets, however, they would no longer return to Ezeiza but would head towards Uruguay. Commodore Agustín de la Vega tried in vain to establish communication with Ezeiza once again and ordered Lieutenant Jorge Mones Ruiz to fly to that airport in

Air Force and Army personnel working to defuse a bomb in a crater in front of the Casa Rosada, after the events of 16 June 1955. (Argentine Federal Police)

a Fiat G.46 to seek information and coordinate more actions. He was accompanied by the UCR representative Miguel Ángel Zavala Ortíz. When he landed in Ezeiza he saw that a number of naval DC-3s, DC-4s, Catalinas, Texan and Kansan aircraft were lined up to take off, and the crew members indicated to him with their hands to also take off. Lieutenant Mones Ruiz approached the international terminal of the airport and when he got out of the cabin, a naval NCO told him to take off, as the Army was about to take over the place. And so, he did, taking off from the taxiway.

Indeed, after all the naval aircraft took off from Ezeiza, the forces loyal to the government of the La Tablada Infantry Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel César Arrechea occupied the airport, without encountering any kind of resistance. The naval conscripts commanded by some naval non-commissioned officers surrendered without offering combat. The Punta Indio Naval Air Base had fallen minutes before into the hands of the La Plata Motorised Regiment. The rebels used almost all available aircraft to flee to Uruguay and some who had decided to stay fled the base on foot, on the opposite side to the Army columns that were approaching the place.

Of the 20 planes that dropped approximately 13 tons of bombs, one of them, a Gloster Meteor F.4 crewed by Lieutenant Guillermo Palacio, also dropped the supplementary fuel tanks, which carried 800 litres of kerosene, on the Casa Rosada to set it on fire, but it fell and exploded in the parking area, affecting many cars. Until then, air raids had held off from attacking Peronist civilians and loyal Army troops near the Ministry of the Navy.

The last rebel group made up of Meteors I-058 (Lieutenant Néstor Marelli), I-064 (Lieutenant Armando Jeannot) and I-098 (Captain Carlos Carús) took off at 5:25 p.m. from Morón and carried out the last raid in the vicinity of Plaza de Mayo, Government House and the Central Police Department. During this action, I-098 received a hit on its right wing from anti-aircraft fire. Once this action was concluded, the three Meteors headed towards Colonia, Uruguay, in search of political asylum. The Meteor I-064 crewed by Lieutenant Jeannot suffered an emergency when he exhausted his fuel reserve, landing in shallow waters off the Uruguayan coast, in front of the city of Carmelo, resulting in little damage. The other two, I-098 and I-058, landed on the runway of the Colonia Aeroclub without problems. Then, Meteors I-031 (Lieutenant Juan Boehler) and I-094 (Lieutenant César Petre) had already landed at the Carrasco International Airport, near Montevideo, and the I-029 (Lieutenant Luis Soto) made an emergency landing with the gear retracted at Melilla aerodrome. All Meteors in flying condition were repatriated between 21st and 24 June, while both I-029 and I-064 were disassembled and flown aboard Bristol 170 freighters to Morón.

Until the so-called Liberating Revolution overthrew Perón in September, the seditious escapees continued in exile in Uruguayan territory. In a radio message broadcast at 5:15 p.m., Perón stated, 'The situation is totally in control. The Ministry of the Navy, where the revolutionary command was, has surrendered and the culprits are arrested. We, as a civilised people, cannot take measures that are advised by passion, but by reflection...'[5]

Around 5:40 p.m., when Perón had been speaking on the national network for about 10 minutes and the Plaza de Mayo had once again filled with people, an Air Force Fiat G.46 made one last low flight, machine-gunning the crowd, before escaping to Uruguay.

After the hard ground combat, which included an incident of false surrender by the rebels, they decided to hand the Ministry of the Navy over to the Army units stationed outside. Generals José Humberto Sosa Molina and Juan José Valle led the seizure of the Ministry of the Navy building, after the meeting with the Minister of the Navy Olivieri, Vice Admiral Benjamin Gargiulo and Toranzo Calderón.

The building of the Ministry of the Navy was surrounded by troops from the Buenos Aires Regiment, with three Sherman tanks commanded by 1st Lieutenant Roberto D'Amico, three M3 half-tracks, and two Universal carriers, plus 88mm light artillery and 80mm howitzers of the Horse Grenadier Regiment. After the last airstrike, the Sherman tanks sprang into action. Captain Di Paolo climbed onto 1st Lieutenant D'Amico's tank and ordered him to advance and attack the building of the Ministry of the Navy. A heavy machine gun was placed in the lavishly decorated 'Room of the Admirals' on the second floor with its crew, two naval NCOs under the command of Corvette Lieutenant Carlos Sommariva, of the Marine Corps. Captain Di Paolo carried with him a huge Argentine flag and was a perfect target for any marksman in the Navy. Sure enough, Corvette Lieutenant Sommariva opened fire, seriously injuring Captain Di Paolo. The Sherman stopped violently and raised its cannon, firing at the second floor, while Sommariva and his assistants fled the place to save their lives. The impact produced a large fire. Once again, the white flag was unfurled and the sailors surrendered to the Army troops at 5:40 p.m.

President Perón (first from the right) inspecting the damage to the Casa Rosada, in the company of several of his closest collaborators. (Argentine Federal Police)

For the official surrender, Rear Admiral Olivieri telephoned the Ministry of the Army, being attended by General Embrioni. Between the two they reached a gentlemen's pact for the surrender of the Navy to the Army and thus prevent the Peronist mobs from entering and carrying out a massacre. This time, General Arnaldo Sosa Molina, brother of the Minister of the Army General Humberto Sosa Molina, was sent as a volunteer. After this meeting, the troops loyal to the government began to clear the square of all civil combatants.

After the failure of the armed uprising, the government of General Perón ordered, in retaliation, the dissolution of Naval Air Squadron Number 3 and the Naval Aviation Command. In addition, the transfer of all the aircraft to the Commander Espora Base was ordered. By 29 June, 19 Texans had gathered there under armed guard and all had their rudders removed to prevent them from flying. Then, a fleet of 12 PBY-5A Catalinas were still on strength, but two of them, serials 0238/2-P-6 and 0262/2-P-4, had been used to transport political refugees to Uruguay.

Victims

The Casa Rosada was hit by 29 bombs, six of which did not explode. As a consequence, 12 people lost their lives there and some 55 were injured, including civilian and military personnel. In 2010, an official investigation carried out by the Archive of the Memory of the Secretariat for Human Rights was published that identified 308 dead, clarifying that to that number should be added '…an uncertain number of victims whose bodies could not be identified, as a result of the mutilations and charring caused by deflagrations.'[6] Among those killed, 111 CGT union activists were identified, 23 of whom were women. There were six dead children also identified, the youngest of whom was three years old. Most of the dead were Argentines, but there were also 12 Italians, five Spaniards, four Germans and six of other nationalities: Bolivian, Chilean, American, Paraguayan, Russian and Yugoslav.

Other sources, however, estimate that the total number of those affected by the bombings was 1,026 people: 229 dead and 797 wounded.

Subsequent events

The bombing and machine-gunning were some of the direct antecedents of the coup that would take place three months later, finally managing to depose President Perón in September 1955 and establishing the government called the Liberating Revolution.

In retaliation, on the night of 16 June, Peronist sympathisers – aware of the close relationship between the ecclesiastical leadership and the seditious who caused the terrorist attack – set fire to the Metropolitan Curia, the basilicas of Santo Domingo and San Francisco, along with other churches, as described in the previous chapter. The newspapers *El Líder* and *Democracia* of 17th, 18th and 19 June reiterated information about the discovery of 'communist arsonists' by the police as well as vast plans for agitation and aggression against Catholic churches. After the overthrow of Perón, the folders with all the documentation referring to the burning of the churches were found in a state office, but their conclusions were rejected because they accused either a Masonic lodge linked to the revolutionaries or communist activists as responsible for the fires.

Although a state of siege was decreed, Perón attempted a reconciliation with the opposition sectors, abandoning his policy of confrontation and trying to calm the working class through radio appeals.

The pilots who escaped to Uruguay were received by an ex-Argentine Army Captain, Guillermo Suárez Mason, a fugitive from Argentine justice since his participation in the 1951 coup attempt. Among the pilots and aircraft crew members were Máximo Rivero Kelly, who was later accused of crimes against humanity while he was the Chief of the Almirante Zar Naval Base in Trelew; Horacio Estrada, head of the ESMA task force; Eduardo Invierno, head of the Naval Intelligence service during the dictatorship; Carlos Fraguío, head of the Naval General Directorate in 1976 with responsibility for detention centres such as the ESMA and the Navy NCO School; Carlos Carpineto, press secretary of the Navy in 1976; Carlos Corti, his successor, and Alex Richmond, naval attaché in Asunción. From the Air Force, Jorge Mones Ruiz, who was a delegate of the dictatorship in the SIDE (*Secretaría de Inteligencia del Estado,* State Intelligence Secretariat) of La Rioja and Osvaldo Andrés Cacciatore, future mayor of the city of Buenos Aires. The three assistants of Rear Admiral Aníbal Olivieri, Minister of the Navy and head of the conspiracy were the Commanders Emilio Massera, Horacio Mayorga and Oscar Montes. Massera was a member of the first of the military juntas, from 1976 onwards; Mayorga was involved in the Trelew massacre; and Montes was chancellor of the National Reorganisation Process.

Among the masterminds were the social democrat Américo Ghioldi, the radical unionist Miguel Ángel Zavala Ortiz, the conservative Oscar Vichi, and the Catholic nationalists Mario Amadeo and Luis María de Pablo Pardo. One hundred and ten

Luis Conrado Battle Berres, President of Uruguay. (Open source)

people, including Zavala Ortiz, arrived in Montevideo aboard the 39 planes used in the attack.

A total of 75 members of the Argentine Navy, including pilots and technicians from the Naval Aviation, and also Marine Corps and logistics officers, were able to escape to Uruguay. From the Argentine Air Force, there were 25 officers, including a commander, six captains, eight first lieutenants, nine lieutenants and a single ensign. A total of 39 naval and Air Force aircraft landed at the Uruguayan aerodromes of Colonia, Carrasco (near Montevideo) and Boiso Lanza, and a Gloster Meteor, which landed on the coast of Carmelo while running out of fuel. The list of aircraft included seven Naval Aviation Douglas C-47, two Douglas C-54, three PBY Catalinas, four Beech AT-11 and 16 North American AT-6 Texans, plus six Air Force Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4 and a single Fiat G.46.

The Uruguayan government of President Luis Battle Berres, whose relations with Perón were not good and sometimes even tense, welcomed them under the terms of political asylum. All were discharged from active service, but all were later reinstated into active duty after the events of September of that year, when the Liberating Revolution triumphed.

In the last hours of 16 June and through Decree Number 9407, President Perón summoned the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which was constituted at 11:00 p.m. under the presidency of General Juan Eriberto Molinuevo. Although practically all the crews of the rebel aircraft had taken refuge in Uruguay, some 1,000 revolutionary troops had surrendered to the loyalist forces. However, it was Perón's decision not to execute the coup plotters and at his request, an attempt was made to reduce the guilt of all those involved in the uprising. The court began its session on Friday 17 June and the first thing it ordered was that both the soldiers and non-commissioned officers arrested would regain their freedom as soon as they gave a statement. The highest-ranking detainees were Rear Admirals Aníbal Olivieri and Samuel Toranzo Calderón. Olivieri appointed Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas as defender and Toranzo Calderón appointed Rear Admiral Teodoro Hartung. Three months later, Rojas would be the vice-president of the government that overthrew Perón, and Hartung would be the Minister of the Navy of the Liberating Revolution. At 3:00 a.m. on 17 June, the leaders of the uprising, Rear Admirals Olivieri and Toranzo Calderón, and Vice Admiral Gargiulo, were told that they would be tried under martial law, and each was offered a weapon to end their lives. Olivieri and Toranzo rejected this invitation, but Benjamin Gargiulo chose to commit suicide. At 05:45 a.m., shortly before dawn, he shot himself while in his office. Olivieri, under whose orders were Lieutenants Emilio Eduardo Massera and Horacio Mayorga, was dismissed and sentenced to one year and six months in prison. Another one who had been directly responsible, Samuel Toranzo Calderón, was demoted and sentenced to indefinite prison time.

The summary trial of the leaders and participants in the attempted coup d'état who had been detained lasted two months and concluded with the imposition of prison sentences for Toranzo Calderón and 19 officers of the Navy and the Air Force, convicted of the crime of 'military rebellion'. In total, 34 Navy officers, 10 Air Force officers and a non-commissioned officer, and a single Army officer were processed and sentenced to prison, some of them for an indefinite period, and the others with sentences of between one and three years in prison. The Military Supreme Council pinned the responsibilities on the rebellious commanders and exonerated the subordinates for the 'due obedience'. It is important to note that all these officers were imprisoned for only one month, since they were all released after the September revolution.

During the weeks following the June event, Perón tried to soften relations with the opposition, lifting the state of siege and allowing opposition party leaders to broadcast messages through radio stations. He even gave a speech himself saying that he had ceased to be the president of the Peronist revolution to be the president of all Argentines. The opposition demanded much more and did not accept Perón's measures, so the CGT called a general strike for the end of August. Perón, this time, gave a very aggressive speech stating:

> With our exaggerated tolerance, we have won the right to repress them violently. And from now on we establish as a permanent rule for our movement: Whoever in any place tries to disturb order against the constituted authorities or against the law or the Constitution may be killed by any Argentine. This rule which every Peronist is to follow is directed not only against those who carry out violence, but also against those who conspire and incite. The slogan for every Peronist, whether alone or within an organisation, is to answer a violent act with another more violent. And whenever one of us fall, five of them will fall.[7]

It was a great misstep to do so and it exasperated the spirits not only of the opposition but within the armed forces themselves, especially in those officers who had remained neutral in the June events. There would be no going back to the events that would unfold in September of that year.

At that time, the opponents devised a quatrain, which began to circulate by word of mouth throughout the country: 'Columbus left from the port of Palos to America. From America to Palos, Perón will leave…' Though people did not know it at that time, Perón would end up in exile in Spain for a long time.

9

FORCES OF THE COUP

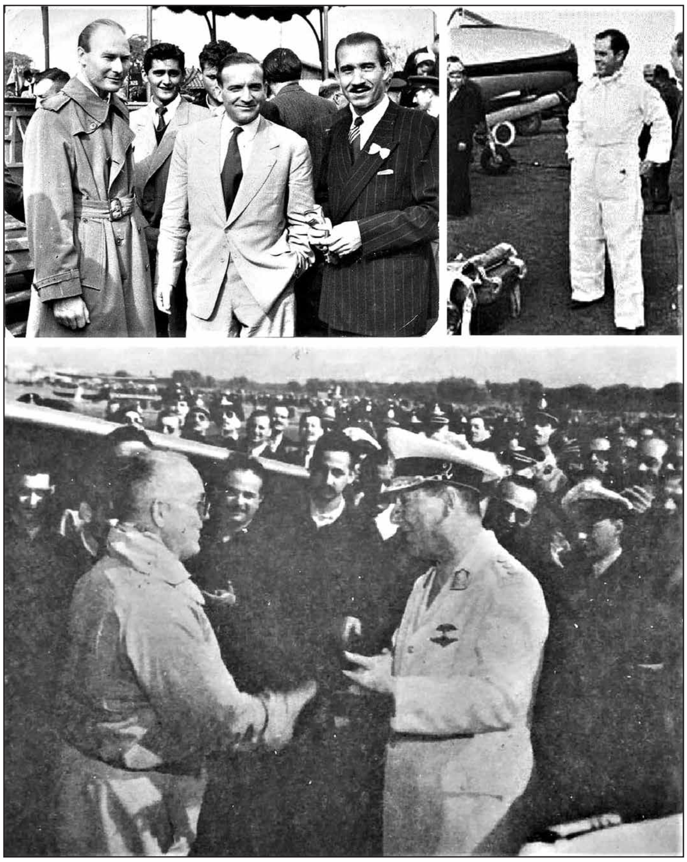
Air Force

In the late 1940s, a number of highly qualified German technicians were hired by the Argentine government for a series of projects. These included the famous top designer of Focke Wulf, engineer Professor Kurt Tank; the former director of the Fieseler factory, Dr Karl Thaulau; the engineer Paul Klages; the former Luftwaffe test pilot, Otto Behrens; the specialist in the dynamics of gases, Dr Pabst; an expert in logistics and methodology, Dr Carl-Hans Plock; a specialist in materials and construction techniques, Dr Wehrse; a specialist in statics, Dr Friedrich Heintzelmann; aircraft designers Wilhelm Bansemier and Ludwig Mittelhuber; the modelist Paul Rothkegel; the nuclear physicist Dr Ronald Richter; Karl Henrici who had designed the flying bombs during the Second World War, and others. Later, Dr Reimar Horten, who had been famous in the design of the first flying wings, was incorporated into the 'Tank Group'. It is estimated that at least 150 of Tank's collaborators and their families were brought to Argentina.

Also, President Perón hired four famous ex-Luftwaffe officers: former bomber pilot, *Oberst* Werner Baumbach (who was killed in the ditching of the Avro Lancaster serial B-036 while testing the flying bomb PAT-1, Proyectil Argentino Teledirigido, Argentine Remote-Control Projectile, in the River Plate in 1953); former Stuka pilot *Oberst* Hans-Ulrich Rudel; former fighter pilot Major Otto Behrens (who was killed flying the third prototype of the interceptor jet fighter I.Aé. 33 Pulqui II on 9 October 1952) and former fighter pilot *Generalleutnant* Adolf Josef Ferdinand Galland, all as advisers for the Argentine Air Force. Galland even made several flights in the Gloster Meteor F.4 jet interceptors, and taught jet fighter tactics to Air Force fighter pilots. It can be stated that one of the most prolific periods of aircraft development in Argentina was between the late 1940s and the mid-1950s. Just to mention some of the most famous and more important projects in that period of time, the aircraft designed and manufactured in Argentina included: FMA 20 El Boyero (liaison), I.Aé. 22 DL (advanced trainer), I.Aé. 24 Calquín (attack & light bomber), I.Aé. 27 Pulqui (interceptor jet fighter, designed by Emile Dewoitine), I.Aé. 30 Ñamcú (interceptor escort fighter), I.Aé. 33 Pulqui II (interceptor jet fighter, designed by Kurt Tank), I.Aé. 34 Clen Antú and I.Aé. 41 Urubú (flying wing gliders designed by Dr. Reimar Horten), and I.A.35 Huanquero (multipurpose twin-engine aircraft).

Regarding the organisation of the Argentine Air Force in the 1950s, the force was led by a Commander-in-Chief. There were several groups under the Air Force's command: the Military Aeronautical Institutes Command, the General Defence Command, the Strategic Air Command, the Tactic Air Command and the Air Transport Command. The main nucleus was in the city of Córdoba where the Military Aircraft Factory (FMA), the Military Aviation School and the Specialised Non-Commissioned Officer School operated.

On 9 January 1951, the organisation of the brigades was restructured by Decree 112/51-BAC Number 45, with the assignment of technical groups, thus becoming operationally independent entities. The name of air regiments, air groups and military air bases was changed to air groups, air squadrons and base groups. Its forces were organised in seven Air Brigades as shown in Table 2.



(Top left) Former Luftwaffe pilots hired by the Perón government: from left to right, Walter Baumbach, Hans-Ulrich Rudel and Adolf Galland. This picture was taken at El Palomar in 1951. (Top right) Otto Behrens, getting ready to fly in the third prototype of the Pulqui II jet fighter. (Bottom) President Perón congratulating Kurt Tank after a successful flight in the Pulqui II jet fighter. (Archivo General de la Nación)

On 28 September 1951, General (Retired) Benjamín Menéndez rebelled in Campo de Mayo, commanding 200 men. The rebellion had only three tanks and was supported by a few Naval Aviation and Air Force aircraft. Faced with this situation, President Perón gave the order to the Minister of Aeronautics Brigadier General César Ojeda to use the Lincolns against the rebel forces. Several of these bombers were prepared to attack the Punta Indio Naval Air Base, which was accomplished, the runway being disabled. The Air Force Gloster Meteor F.4 interceptor fighters were also used as deterrents against all the coup attempts.

In the aforementioned attempt on 16 June 1955, although the Gloster Meteors came into action and shot down a couple of rebel naval aircraft, the Avro Lincoln bombers had been prepared at their base in Villa Reynolds in San Luis, headquarters of the VII Air Brigade, to bomb the Punta Indio Naval Air Base. However, this was not necessary, since the ground forces of the Army loyal to the government managed to take control of the rebel base.

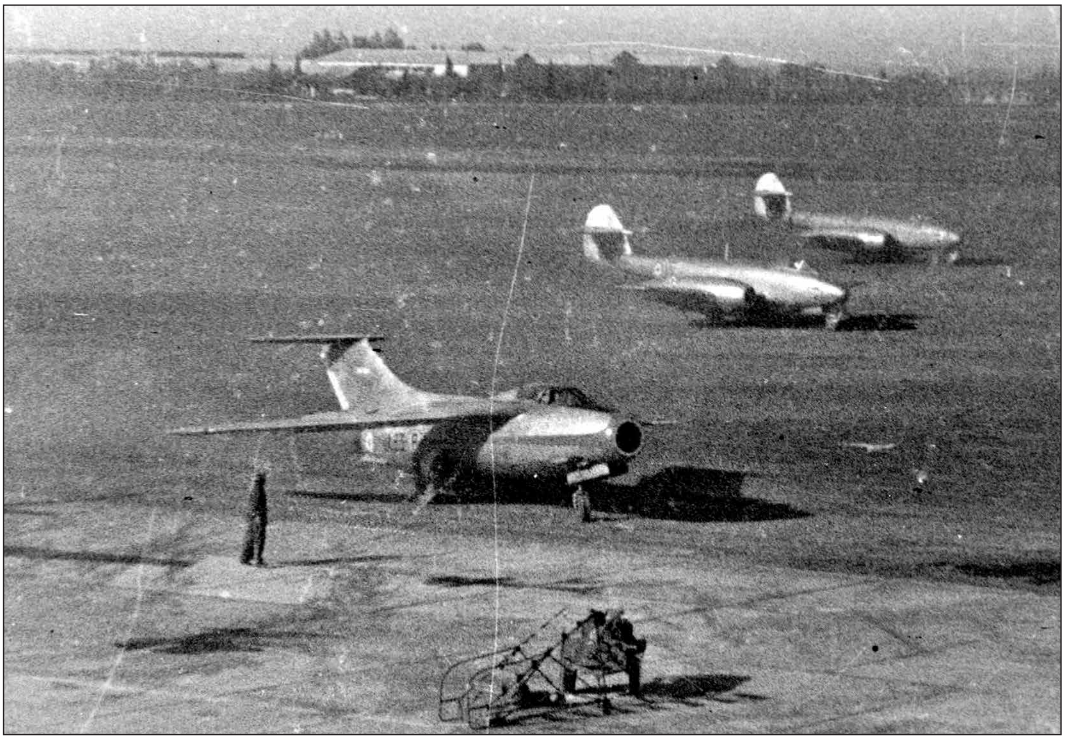
On 20 January 1955, Brigadier Major Fabri had been appointed as the new Commander in Chief of the Argentine Air Force, after Brigadier General Carlos Mauriño requested his retirement. Fabri was sworn in at the headquarters of the Commander in Chief of the Air Force on 25 January before the Minister of Aeronautics

Brigadier Major Juan Ignacio San Martín.

The mandate of Juan Fabri at the head of the Air Force ended in September 1955 after a rebellion of the armed forces broke out, ending up overthrowing the government of Juan Domingo Perón. After Fabri's retirement as the head of the Air Force Commander in Chief, during those critical days, Brigadier General Gustavo Hermansson, who was in retirement and had already held that position during 1951 and 1952, was appointed as his successor. Hermansson returned to active service until 13 January 1956, at which time he went into permanent retirement and was replaced by Brigadier Major Heriberto Ahrens.

Thanks to their tremendous firepower, both Avro Lincolns and Lancasters became prized elements to suppress all revolutionary attempts from 1951 to 1962. By the mid-1950s, the Argentine Air Force had aircraft types on strength as shown in Table 3 (on the next page).

Furthermore, the 50 Curtiss H75-0 Hawk fighters were withdrawn from use in 1954. Also, in 1955, all 45 Fiat G.55A/B Centauro fighters were withdrawn from use due to frequent engine problems, the weak landing gear and high maintenance costs. They did not participate in the events of 1955. Right after the coup, the 'Pulqui II' project fell out of favour with the government and most of the German technicians left the country, including Kurt Tank, who emigrated to India to work in the Hindustan Aircraft Industry. In the years following the coup, the Argentine Air Force received 90 Beechcraft B-45(T-34A) Mentor primary trainers (1957), Morane-Saulnier MS-760 Paris armed advanced trainers (1958), and 28 North American F-85F-40 Sabre fighters (1960).



The I.Aé. 33 Pulqui II interceptor jet fighter with two Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4s of the Argentine Air Force in the early 1950s. (Dr Atilio Marino via Vladimiro Cettolo)

Table 2: Argentine Air Force Brigades

Air Brigade	Location	Base	Groups	Aircraft
I	El Palomar	El Palomar	a) 1st Transport Group b) 1st Training Group c) Base Group No. 1 d) Technical Group N0. 1	a) Junkers Ju.52/3m, Vickers Viking, Beech AT-11, Douglas DC-3/C-47, De Havilland Dove, Bristol 170, Airspeed AS65 Consul. b) Fiat G.46 & Focke Wulf Fw.44J
II	Paraná	General Urquiza	a) 1st Observation Group b) Base Group No. 2 c) Technical Group No. 2	a) I.Aé.22 DL, Beech AT-11
III	Reconquista	Reconquista	a) 2nd Attack Group b) Base Group No. 3 c) Technical Group No. 3	a) I.Aé. 24 Calquín, Fiat G.46, Beech AT-11
IV	Mendoza	El Plumerillo	a) 1st Fighter Group b) 1st Attack Group c) Base Group No. 4 d) Technical Group No. 4	a) Fiat G.55, Curtiss H75-0, b) Northrop 8A-2 and later I.Aé. 24 Calquín
V	Villa Reynolds	Coronel Pringles	a) 1st & 2nd Bombardment Groups b) Base Group No. 5 c) Technical Group No. 5	a) Martin 139WAA, Avro Lincoln, Avro Lancaster
VI	Tandil	Tandil	a) 2nd & 3rd Fighter Groups b) Base Group No. 6 c) Technical Group No. 6	a) Gloster Meteor F.4
VII	Morón	Morón	a) 2nd Transport Group b) Base Group No. 7 c) Technical Group No. 7	a) De Havilland Dove, Douglas DC-3/C-47, Douglas DC-4, Vickers Viking, Bristol 170, Avro Lancastrian, etc.

Table 3: Argentine Air Force Types in the mid-1950s

Type (years in service)	Number of aircraft*	Role
Gloster G.41 F.Mk 4 Meteor (1947–1970)	100	Jet fighter/Interceptor
I.Ae. 33 Pulqui II (1950–1960)	5	Experimental jet fighter
Fiat G.55 A/B Centauro (1947–1955)	30/15	Fighter/Advanced trainer
Avro 694 B.Mk 2 Lincoln (1947–1967)	30	Heavy bomber
Avro 683 B.Mk 1 Lancaster (1947–1966)	15	Heavy bomber
I.Ae. 24 Calquín (1947–1959)	101	Attack & light bomber
Piper PA-18-150 Super Cub (1955–1973)	7	Primary trainer
Focke Wulf Fw.44J Stieglitz (1937–1955)	150	Primary trainer
Percival P.40 Prentice T.Mk 1 (1948–1962)	100	Trainer
North American NA.16-4P (1937–1955)	30	Advanced trainer
Fiat G.46-4B (1948–1960)	70	Advanced trainer
I.Ae. DL-22 (1944–1959)	201	Advanced trainer
Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan (1948–1963)	30	Bomber-navigation trainer
IA-35 Huanquero (1953–1974)	47	Multipurpose
De Havilland DH-104 Dove (1947–1968)	70	Light transport
Beechcraft D18C (1948–1967)	1	Light transport
Junkers Ju.52/3m (1939–1955)	15	Transport
Douglas DC-3/C-47 (1943–1990)	50	Transport
Douglas DC-4/C-54 (1946–1969)	10	Transport
Avro 691 Mk.III Lancastrian (1948–1960)	3	Transport
Bristol 170 Mk. IA Freigher (1946–1967)	15	Cargo/passenger transport
Vickers T.Mk 1/Mk 1B Viking (1946–1963)	24	Cargo/passenger transport
FMA 20 El Boyero (1940–1958)	25	Liaison
Piper J-3 Cub / PA-12 (1946–1980)	5	Liaison
Morane-Saulnier MS502 Criquet (1950–1956)	1	Tug plane
Fairchild 82D (1937–1963)	2	Aerial Photography
Sikorsky S-51 (1947–1967)	15	Utility helicopter
Sikorsky S-55 (1954–1968)	7	Utility helicopter

* The number of aircraft in the table corresponds to the total of this type in service in the Air Force throughout its history.

Navy

The Argentine Navy had its main base in Puerto Belgrano, near Bahía Blanca; a smaller base in Río Santiago, which was the garrison of the Naval School; and the Naval Lyceum. In the federal capital there was the Navy Mechanics School and the Navy Arsenal. Admiral Carlos Rivero de Olazábal was the commander of the Argentine Navy in 1955.

At dusk on 16 June of that year, after the failure of the bombardment of the Plaza de Mayo by a group of naval officers, Captain Arturo H. Rial, director of Naval Schools, and his subordinate Lieutenant Commander Carlos Pujol, who had been oblivious to that blow, came together to make a second attempt. They worked in the building at 610 Florida Street in Buenos Aires, where the Directorate of Naval Personnel was located, which gave them the possibility of contacting bases and units. One of their first contacts, Lieutenant Marcos Oliva Day, introduced them to his brother Arturo who participated in the political environment of Arturo Frondizi.

Captains Juan Carlos Duperré and Jorge Gallastegui also gravitated to be near Captain Rial: the three entered into conversations with the Lieutenant Commanders Jorge Palma and Carlos Sánchez Sañudo from the Naval War College. All of them were being investigated as to whether or not they had participated in the 16 June bombings. This situation gave them free time to conspire

Argentine Air Force Avro 683 B.Mk 1 Lancaster serial B-034 in the 1950s. (Dr Atilio Marino via Vladimiro Cettolo)

Brigadier General Gustavo Hermansson, Commander of the Argentine Air Force, immediately after the successful September coup against President Perón. (Archivo General de la Nación)

against the constitutional order. Prisoners Manrique and Rivolta managed to communicate with Captain Rial, providing a list of admirals who had not given an effusively negative response to the offer to command the coup of the 16th: Garzoni, Rojas, Sadi Bonnet, and Dellepiane.

In Puerto Belgrano, Vice Admiral Ignacio Chamorro was in charge of the entire Naval Area, and behind him, Rear Admiral Héctor Fidanza was the head of the base. Both were ideologically linked to the Peronist government. But the second commander of the base, Captain Jorge Perren, had sympathised with Rear Admiral Samuel Toranzo Calderón and decided to join forces in favour of the coup.

Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas' professional prestige had earned him unanimous respect. The great portraits of the President and the First Lady were missing from the Naval Military School that he directed; they were not flattered, but nor were they spoken ill of. A few days after 16 June, Lieutenant Commander Aldo Molinari, to probe Rojas's mood, announced to him that a new coup d'état was underway, to which the Rear Admiral limited himself to replying, 'Did you think it through?[1]

After that, Palma and Sánchez Sañudo met with him and discussed the need to overthrow Perón. Rojas agreed, but asked for time to decide whether to fold or not. Finally, Rojas, through Lieutenant Roberto Wulff de la Fuente, confirmed his acceptance to Juan Carlos Bassi. Then Arturo Rial met with Rojas and they agreed that the Rear Admiral would be at the head of the Navy at the time the coup broke out, and that he would subordinate himself if an admiral of greater seniority in the force should join. They were all very aware that if the Navy rose alone, it would be another failure, so they embarked upon a campaign to also gain the support of various Army units, and of course the Air Force. The work was very slow and methodical, due to the controls of the state intelligence service, which controlled the movements of officers and civilians not aligned to the regime.

In this way, the preparations would be coordinated by Rial and the actions would be carried out under the leadership of Rojas. None had participated in the coup of 16 June, and Rojas himself decided to cut off communications with the others until the indicated time, to avoid suspicion. At the end of June, Captain Perren, second commander of the Puerto Belgrano Naval Base, learned that Rojas was leading this new movement and that Rial was organising it in Buenos Aires. So, he decided to join in and provided them with information about the activities scheduled for the Sea Fleet throughout July, August and September so that they could choose a suitable date.

Rear Admiral Rojas remained on the side-lines, but his assistants Lieutenant Oscar Ataide and Lieutenant Jorge Isaac Anaya were gathering information for him. Throughout July, in Bahía Blanca, Perren accelerated the training of the troops so that they became familiar with a new model of rifle that replaced the old WRMauser,

B-021
B-021
B-021

Avro 694 B.Mk 2 Lincoln serial B-021 in the 1950s. (Dr Atilio Marino via Vladimiro Cettolo)

Top: Argentine Air Force fighter pilots posing next to Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4 serial I-039 in the mid-1950s at Morón AFB. Bottom: Bomber pilots and crew posing next to Avro Lincoln serial B-006, probably at Villa Reynolds in the mid-1950s. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

in order to have well-trained troops before the imminent pronouncement.

To avoid giving firepower to another uprising, Admiral Guillermo Brown ordered that the planes used on 16 June be transferred without machine guns or fuses to the Comandante Espora Naval Air Base, attached to Puerto Belgrano in Bahía Blanca. There, a group of engineering officers secretly manufactured fuses to detonate 50-, 100- and 200-kilogram bombs.

In the mid-1950s, the Argentine Navy had the following ships in active service: five heavy cruisers, one corvette, five frigates, nine minesweepers, 12 torpedo ships/destroyers, two patrol boats, two gunboats, 11 PT boats, three submarines, one beacon boat, seven transport ships, five hydrographic boats, one oceanographic vessel, two LMSs, 11 LSTs, seven ocean tugs, seven tugs, two workshop vessels and five gasoline tankers (see Appendix I). The two dreadnought-type battleships, the ARA *Rivadavia* and ARA *Moreno*, had been withdrawn from service in the early 1950s and were used for various tasks, from warehouses to barracks and floating prisons. Both units were anchored at the battleship dock of the Puerto Belgrano Naval Base and at the end of the 1950s, they were sold for scrapping.

Naval Aviation, aircraft types on strength by the mid-1950s are as shown in Table 4.

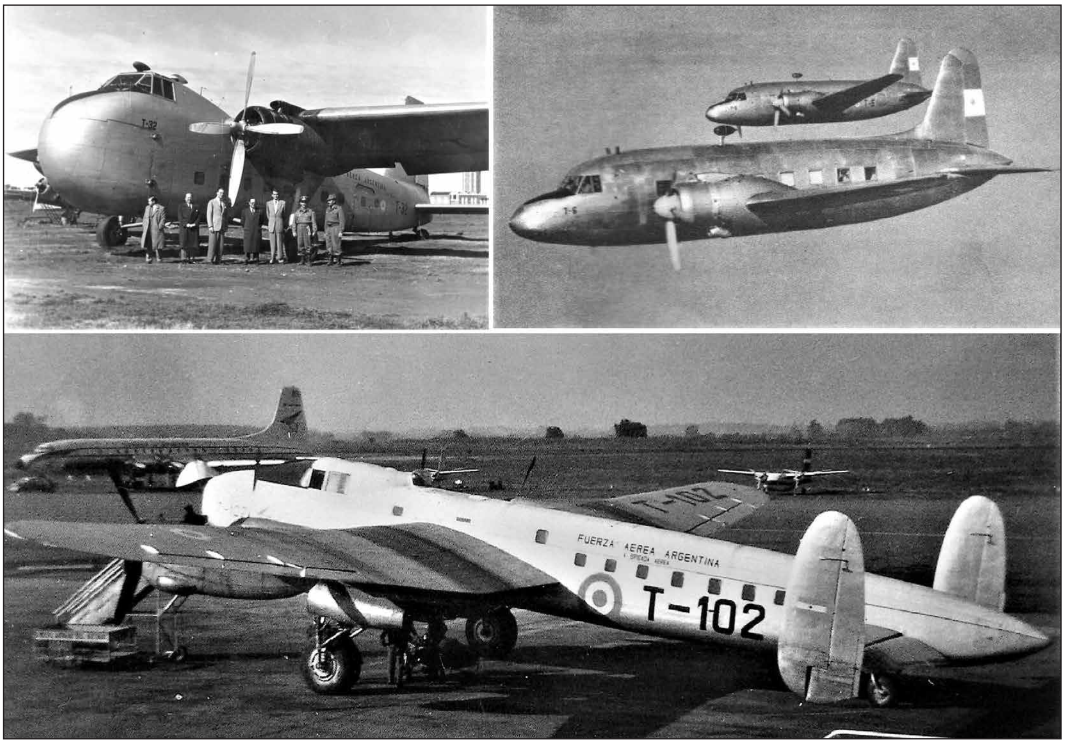
Although the flight activities of the Naval Aviation were severely restricted after the June uprising, little by little they were resumed until they reached their operational level again. In fact, after the coup of September 1955, the Argentine Naval Aviation was reinforced with 26 Vought F4U-5/F4U-5N/F4U-5NL Corsair fighters (1956), 24 Grumman F9F-2 Panther jet fighters (1957), 8 Lockheed P-2V5 Neptune (1958) and the first aircraft carrier, the ARA *V-1 Independencia* (ex-HMS *Warrior*) (1958).

Table 4: Argentine Naval Aviation Types		
Type/Years in service	**Number of aircraft***	**Role**
Boeing/Stearman PT-17 Kaydet (1947–1962)	60	Primary trainer
Curtiss-Wright 16E.3 Kelito (1935–1957)	28	Primary trainer
Focke Wulf J44 Stieglitz (1940–1958)	7	Primary trainer
Luscombe 8E Silvaire (1948–1965)	3	Primary trainer
Vultee BT-13/SNV-1 Valiant (1947–1963)	29	Basic trainer
North American SNJ-3/4/5C/AT-6A/B/C Texan (1947–1970)	124	Advanced trainer
Grumman G-15/G-20/J2F5/J2F6 Duck (1937–1958)	46	Observation/Sea Patrol/SAR
Supermarine Walrus WR.Mk 1 (1947–1958)	8	Sea Patrol/Reconnaissance
Grumman G-21A/JRF-6B Goose (1946–1956)	6	Light transport
Canadian Vickers PBV-1A Canso A (1946–1970) Boeing Canada PB2B-1 Canso Consolidated Model 28-5AMC Catalina IIA	17	Maritime Patrol bomber/ SAR
Martin PBM-5S Mariner (1954–1964)	8	Maritime Patrol bomber
Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan (1948–1966)	13	Bomber trainer/Light bomber
Beechcraft D18S (1948–1965)	1	Light transport
Douglas C-47 (1946–1979)	15	Transport
Douglas DC-2-243/DC-2-267 (1946–1958)	2	Transport
Douglas C-54/DC-4 (1947–1976)	7	Transport
*The number of aircraft in the table corresponds to the total of this type in service in Naval Aviation throughout its history		

Army

One of the former senior German officers hired by the Perón government was Otto Rolf Skorzeny, an Austrian engineer and colonel of the Waffen-SS, who was in command of the *Friedentahler* unit, being a special operations specialist during the Second World War. An expert in espionage and sabotage actions, he was nicknamed 'Scarface' by the Americans because of the large scars that furrowed his cheeks. He became famous for rescuing the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, as well as for carrying out Operation Greif which earned him the title of 'The Most Dangerous Man in Europe' by the Allies. He would become President Perón's military adviser and Eva Perón's bodyguard.

The units of the Argentine Army at that time were strategically distributed in a territory of almost three million

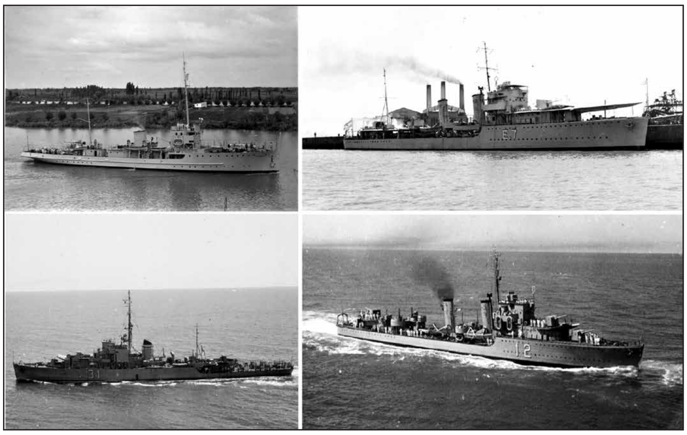


Some Argentine Air Force transport planes: A Bristol 170 Mk. IA Freighter (top left), a Vickers T.Mk 1 Viking (top right) and an Avro 691 Mk.III Lancastrian. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

square kilometres. It had a central grouping in the city of Córdoba, another on the western border (Mendoza, Catamarca, San Juan and La Rioja), another garrisoning the northern border (Salta and Jujuy), another covered the northwest border (Entre Ríos, Santa Fé and Corrientes, with forces in the Chaco and Formosa), while several detachments were based in Patagonia (Neuquén, Río Negro, Chubut and Santa Cruz). The federal capital was garrisoned by an Army division and the province of Buenos Aires by a cavalry division.

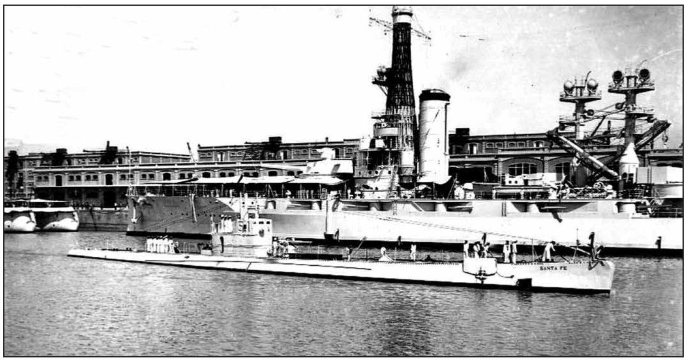
During the second government of Juan Domingo Perón, José Domingo Molina, at that time with the rank of major general, had command of the 17,000 Army effectives who accompanied the remains of Eva Perón from the National Congress, where they had been veiled, to the premises of the General Labour Confederation (CGT). After the sudden death of Lieutenant General Alfredo Andrés Ávalos, he was promoted to lieutenant general and appointed Army commander in November 1953. Right after the September coup, on 3 October 1955, Molina was arrested by the government of General Eduardo Lonardi; however, he was later released. His replacement, Lieutenant General Julio Lagos, was

Puerto Belgrano, the Argentine Navy's main base. Some Naval Aviation hangars can be seen on the right. (Histarmar Archives)

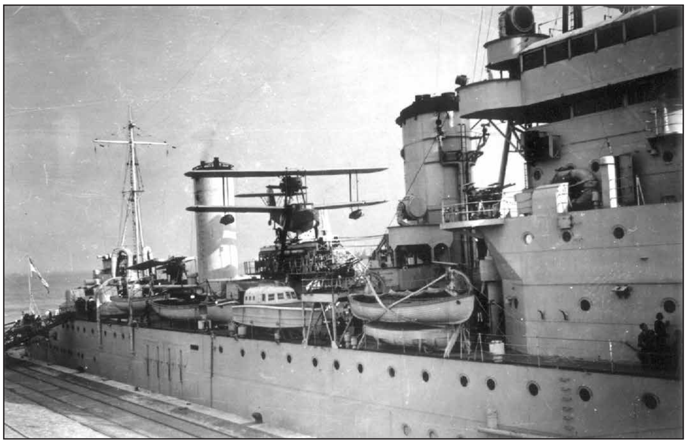


Minesweeper ARA *Bouchard* (top left), destroyer/torpedo ship ARA *Entre Ríos* (top right), frigate ARA *Hercules* (bottom left) and destroyer/torpedo ship ARA *Santa Cruz* (bottom right). (Histarmar Archives)

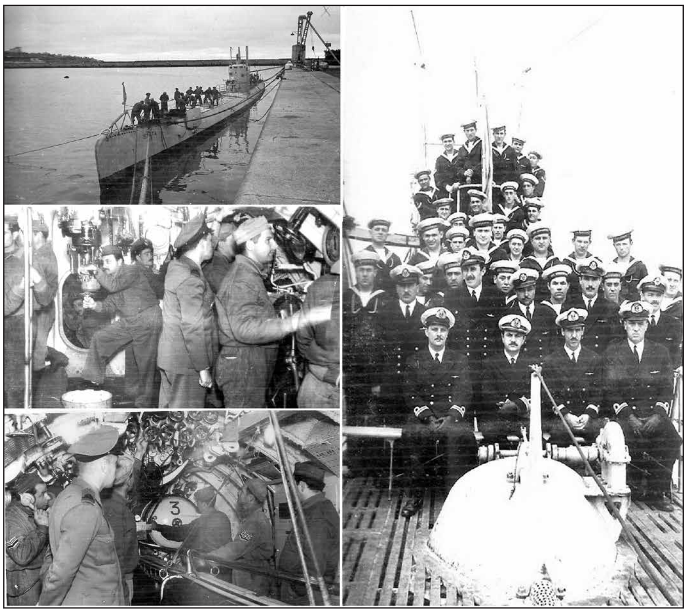
The heavy cruisers of the Argentine Navy, C-5 ARA *Nueve de Julio* and C-3 ARA *La Argentina,* moored at the dock of Puerto Belgrano. (Histarmar Archives)



The Tarantino-class submarine S-1 ARA *Santa Fé* next to the dreadnought-type battleship ARA *Rivadavia.* (Histarmar Archives)



A Naval Aviation Supermarine Walrus WR.Mk 1 on its catapult aboard the heavy cruiser ARA *La Argentina* (Histarmar Archives)



Scenes aboard the Argentine Navy submarine ARA Salta (S-3), in the early 1950s: Salta in Mar del Plata; the command room; the torpedo room; and the entire crew posing on the deck. (Histarmar Archives)

Three Naval Aviation Martin PBM-5S Mariner maritime patrol bombers in the mid-1950s. (Histarmar Archives)

appointed as Commander of the Argentine Army; he had strongly supported General Lonardi during the September coup. He would leave office in June 1956 when he disagreed with General Aramburu's policies, being replaced by Lieutenant General Francisco José Zerda.

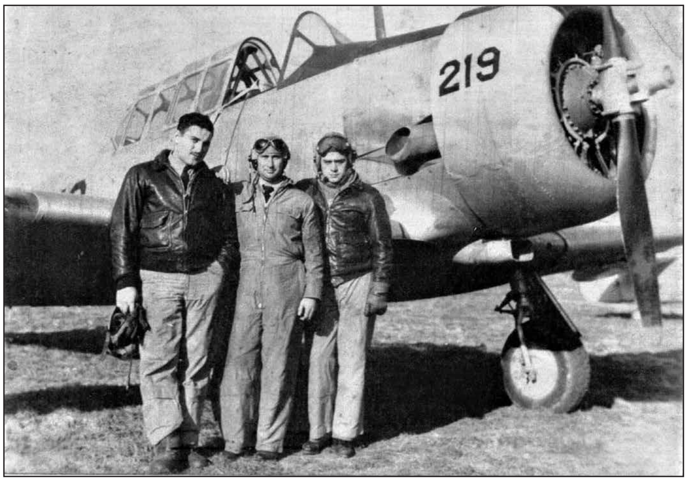
The Argentine Army operated the armoured vehicles shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Armoured Vehicles Operated by the Argentine Army

Armoured vehicle	Number of vehicles*	Year of acquisition
T-16 Universal Carrier	250	1948
Sherman IVC/VC Firefly tank w/QF 17-pounder 76.2mm gun	120	1946
Sherman M4A4 tank w/75mm cannon OQF	206	1948
British Crusader tank w/105mm Schneider gun	12	1949
British Crusader tank w/75mm Krupp gun	6	1949
Nahuel DL.43 tank w/75mm Krupp gun (built in Argentina)	16	1943
M3 half-track	320	Late 1940s

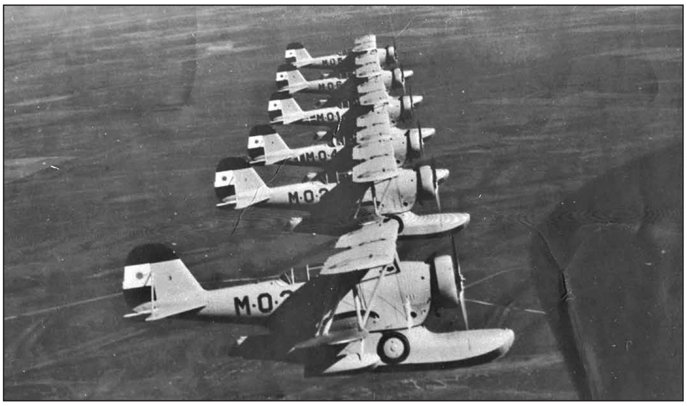
*The number of armoured vehicles in the table corresponds to the total of this type in service in the Army throughout its history

Naval Aviation Boeing Canada PB2B-1 Canso, serial 0263/2-P-5, which took part in bombing raids on 19 September 1955, photographed here in 1950 on Nahuel Huapi Lake. (Vladimiro Cettolo Collection)

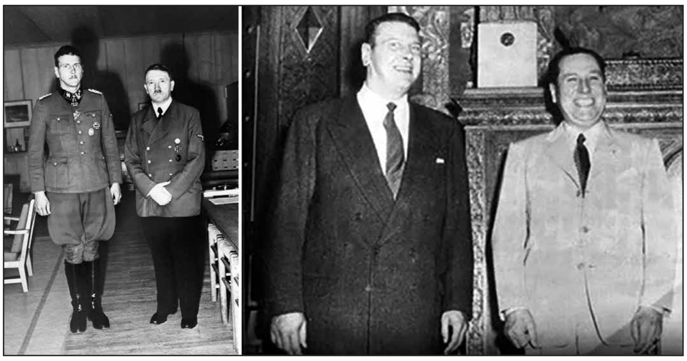


Three Naval Aviation pilots posing with a North American T-6 Texan in the 1950s. Left to right: Corvette Lieutenant Oscar Sabarots, Frigate Lieutenant Justiniando Martines Achaval and Corvette Lieutenant Cesáreo Goñi. (Histarmar Archives)

With the official creation of the Argentine Air Force (FAA) on 4 January 1945, all the aircraft of the Army passed to the new air force. But the Argentine Army did not resign itself to running out of aircraft completely, so that in December of that year, it acquired its first three Douglas C-47s, which were numbered as serials ETA-101/102/103, as support aircraft and for administrative tasks, and where later also to train the airborne troops and paratroopers. They



A perfect linear formation of Grumman Duck amphibians of the Argentine Naval Aviation in the 1950s. (Horacio Gareiso via Dr. Atilio Marino)



(Left) *Obersturmbannführer* (Lieutenant Colonel) in the Waffen-SS, Otto Skorzeny, with Führer Adolf Hitler in the Wolf's Lair in 1943 after the rescue of *Duce* Mussolini. (Right) Otto Skorzeny with President Perón in Argentina in 1952. (Open source)

In these images, officers and soldiers of the Argentine Army are wearing uniforms inspired by the German Wehrmacht, with Swiss M.18 steel helmets (in Argentina it was called M.38) painted in olive green, used from 1938 to the early 1960s. (Open source)

CARAS y CARETAS

Towards the end of the 1930s, the Argentine Army adopted a German style uniform but in olive green, with helmets in the German style AE M.16 and M.35 made of felt, vegetable fibre and in the 1950s, fibreglass, manufactured in Argentina, with the Argentine cockade painted on the sides. The Marine Corps would also adopt the German M.35 helmets. (Open source)

were stationed at the Aircraft Factory in Córdoba. It was only on 17 November 1956 that the Army Aviation Command was founded and three more C-47s were purchased, and also a small number of liaison aircraft, light transports and small helicopters. In 1960, the C-47s were transferred to the Air Force.

Starting in May 1955 at the Córdoba Artillery School, Captain Raúl Eduardo Molina led a parallel conspiracy, along with other young officers: 1st Lieutenant Francisco Casares, Captains Osvaldo Azpitarte, Alejandro Palacio, Juan José Buasso, and 1st Lieutenants Augusto Alemanzor, Anselmo Matteoda and Alfredo Larrosa. Then Major Melitón Quijano Semino was added, whose rank made him important in the group, given the low hierarchy of the rest of the conspirators.

Other coup groups were formed at the General Paz Military Lyceum and the Airborne Troops School. In the latter, the leader was Julio Fernández Torre. At the Lyceum, Major Mario Efraín Arruabarrena surrounded himself with his collaborators: Captains Juan José Claisse, Juan Manuel de la Vega and 1st Lieutenant Alfredo Viola Dellepiane. Since they lacked a high-ranking officer to lead them, Molina offered this responsibility to retired Colonel Arturo Ossorio Arana, who had been director of the Artillery School until 1951. As junior officers, small groups of friends organised themselves, and then contacted higher-ranking officers to lead them.

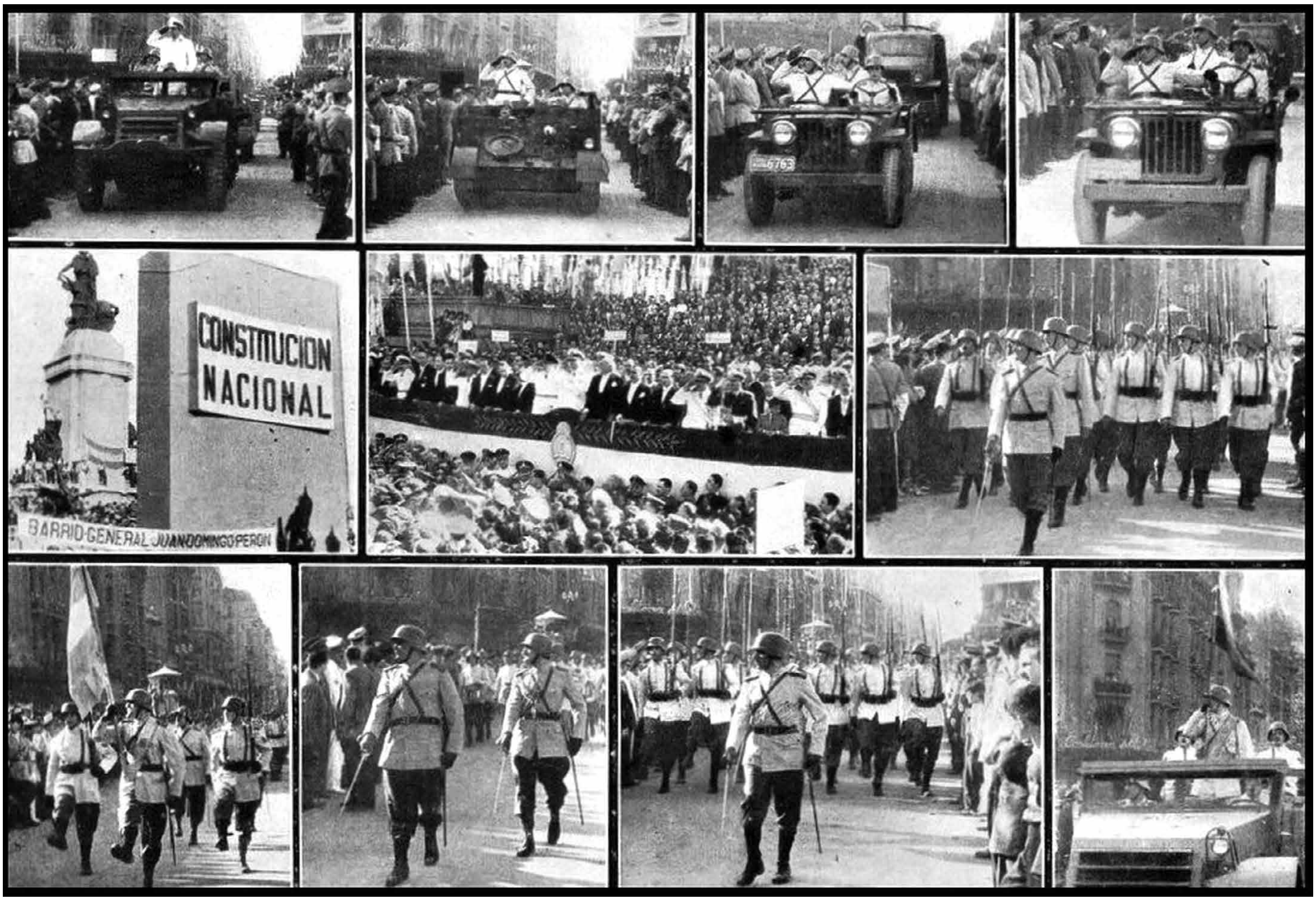
On 15 July, Perón delivered a speech in a reconciliatory tone, as he had done in the previous weeks, saying:

> We limited freedoms insofar as it was essential to limit them to achieve our objectives. We do not deny that we have restricted certain freedoms: we have always done it in the best way, to the extent that is indispensable. [...] I stopped being the head of a revolution to become the President of all Argentines, friends or adversaries. The Peronist revolution has ended; Now begins a new stage, which is of a constitutional nature.[2]

The Radical Civic Union put the message to the test with a request for permission to carry out public acts, which was denied. On 21 July, the radical group in Congress denounced the disappearance of Dr Juan Ingallinella, who had been arrested on 17 June of that year by the Rosario police, tortured to death and his corpse thrown into the Paraná River. The police officers were exonerated. On the 27th, the president of the Radical Civic Union, Arturo Frondizi, had permission to speak on Radio Belgrano.

In the Army, forces were more geographically dispersed and ideological positions were not homogeneous. An example is that of the Second Army, the command headquarters of which was in the city of San Luis, and its structure was divided into two groups. It had a total of about 10,000 troops scattered throughout the Cuyo region. The first of the two groups was commanded from Mendoza by General Héctor Raviolo Audiso, loyal to the government, and encompassed the Cuyan provinces. His detachments were: the 1st in Mendoza with Lieutenant Colonel Cabello, from the rebel faction; the 2nd in Campo de los Andes with Lieutenant Colonel Cecilio Labayru, also a rebel; the 3rd in Calingasta (San Juan) with Colonel Ricardo Botto, loyal; and the 4th in San Rafael with Colonel Di Sisto, a rebel. The region called Cuyo in Argentina includes the provinces of Mendoza, San Juan and San Luís, and is located in the centre-west of that country.

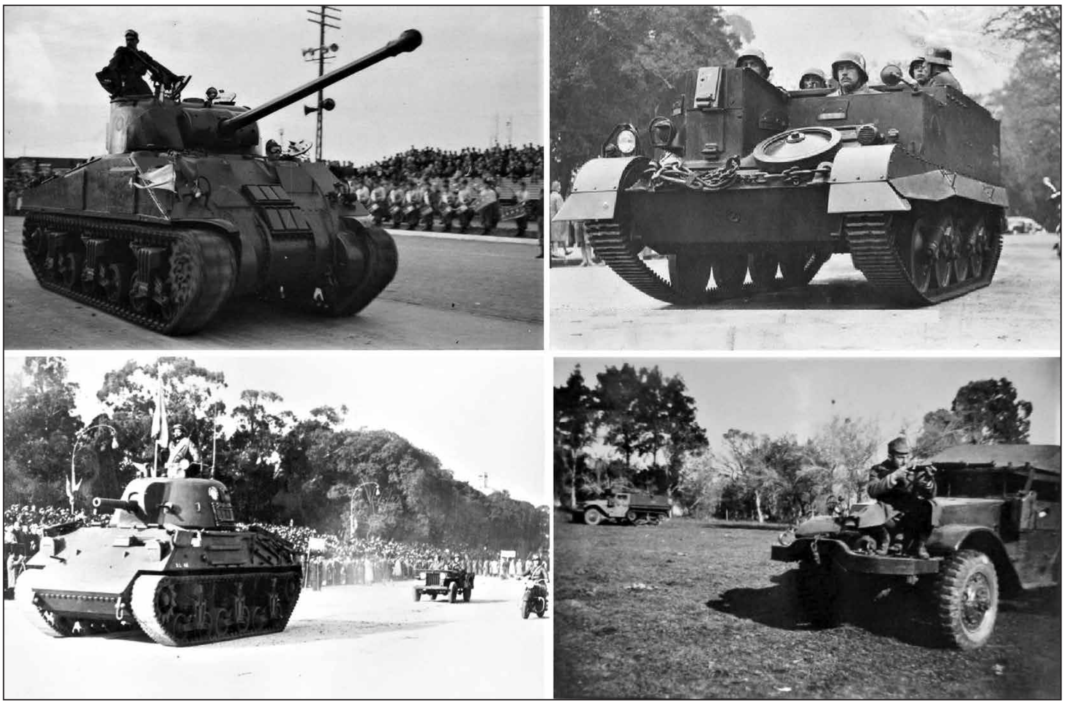
On the other hand, the chief of operations of Colonel Botto's detachment was the rebel Lieutenant Colonel Mario Fonseca, who was a native of the province and had very fluid relations with the civilian commandos that were being prepared there. The second


CONSTITUCION
NACIONAL
BARRIO GENERAL JUAN DOMINGO PERON

The Buenos Aires Motorised Regiment and the 3rd Infantry Regiment of the Argentine Army in a parade in 1949 after the oath of the national constitution of that year. M3 half-track vehicles, Jeeps and T-16 Universal Carriers, and troops marching in front of President Perón and high government authorities in downtown Buenos Aires can be seen in the pictures. (Open source)

group, which included Río Negro and Neuquén, was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Duretta, who, being a friend of Perren, had compromised his participation in a possible uprising.

The headquarters of the entire Second Army command was in the city of San Luis, where Lieutenant Colonel Gustavo Eppens had gathered around him the Majors León Santamaría, Roberto Vigil, and Celestino Argumedo, along with several captains. Sensing the favourable position of the Chief of the General Staff, General Eugenio Arandía, Eppens approached him, and he replied enthusiastically. Arandía ordered Lieutenant Colonel Juan José Ávila to establish contacts with civilians in the three Cuyan capitals but did not probe the spirit of the head of all of them, General Julio Alberto Lagos, who was then presumed a Peronist.



Clockwise: An Argentine Army Sherman Firefly tank, a Universal Carrier T-16, a pair of M3 half-track vehicles and a locally manufactured Nahuel DL.43 tank. (Archivo General de la Nación)

In Buenos Aires nothing was known about the situation of the Army in Cuyo, but Aramburu and Ossorio Arana quickly joined forces to coordinate an action plan in that area. For their part, a group of retired officers collaborated in the recruitment: Octavio Cornejo

REPUBLICA ARGENTINA
MINISTERIO DE EJERCITO
ETA 102
EJERCITO ARGENTINO

Two of the Argentine Army's Douglas C-47s flying in formation in the 1950s. (Dr Atilio Marino via Vladimiro Cettolo)

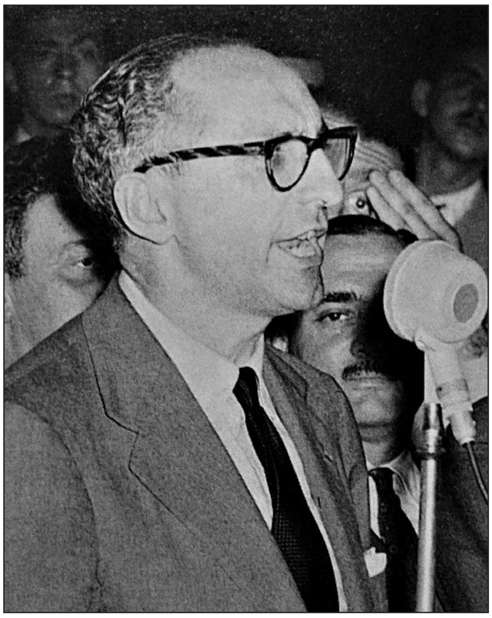
Soldiers from the Artillery School of the Argentine Army during manoeuvres near Córdoba in the late 1940s. (Life Magazine)

Saravia, Franciso Zerda, Emilio de Vedia y Miter, and so on. Another general also joined: Juan José Uranga, although his destination did not have troop command since he was head of the Welfare Projects.

On 20 July, Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Crabba, invited by his brother, met with Colonel Eduardo Señorans, another of the nationalist Army chiefs, and reported that both he and his boss, General Dalmiro Videla Balaguer, wanted to meet to evaluate an uprising. General Videla Balaguer was a notorious supporter of President Perón and commanded the IV Military Region, based in Río Cuarto. Videla Balaguer and Crabba were in the Army Ministry on 16 June, and the burning of the Catholic churches had touched their deep religious sentiment, shaking their loyalty. But due to a misunderstanding, they believed that Señorans was the leader in Buenos Aires, and General Videla refused to subordinate himself to a colonel.

Julio Lagos was the only active general formally affiliated with the Peronist party. His membership was due to his nationalist tendencies: Perón had been his companion

An Argentine Army Infantry soldier in full gear in the early 1950s. Note the Swiss M18 steel helmet. (Archivo General de la Nación)



Dr Arturo Frondizi, president of the Radical Civic Union (UCR). He would be elected president of Argentina for the period 1958–1962. (Open source)

PATRIA Y HONOR
G. O. U.

Lieutenant General Julio Lagos (left). Perón, a colonel at that time, (first left) with a group of officers, all members of the GOU (centre). The emblem of the GOU (right). (Open source)

General Dalmiro Videla Balaguer, Commander of the IV Military Region in Río Cuarto. (Open source)

in the GOU (*Grupo de Oficiales Unidos*, United Officers Group, a secret lodge with nationalist tendency, created within the Army on 10 March 1943) and together they had participated in the revolution of 1943: he was a person who had been loyal to Perón since its inception and who since 1954 had been in intimate disagreement with the government.

Dr Alberto V. Tedín, who like other nationalists had distanced himself from Perón after having supported him, along with Dr Bonifacio del Carril and Dr Francisco Ramos Mejía tried in vain to modify their attitude. On 27 July, at del Carril's house, General Lagos met with General Justo León Bengoa and Doctors Francisco Ramos Mejía and Jorge Gradin: they tried to convince him to join a revolutionary attempt. Initially Lagos refused, but then his wife made him doubt, reminding him of the burning of the churches with impunity. These meetings were not the only ones, according to del Carril: 'all the threads were unified and, in reality, it was a single conspiracy, with vast and varied sources, all converging.'[3]

However, shortly after, due to a discussion with Minister General Lucero, Lagos went into retirement and his place in command of the Second Army was taken by General José María Sosa Molina.

In mid-August General Bengoa was arrested, suspected of planning a coup. In the province of Corrientes, Colonel Eduardo Arias Duval, chief of staff of a unit in Curuzú Cuatiá, sought a way to join the revolutionary camp with the main intention of liberating Bengoa and putting him in command of his troops in Entre Ríos. The powerful group of armoured troops at Curuzú Cuatiá had its leadership working from Buenos Aires. Here, the highest authority was the loyal Lieutenant Colonel Ernesto Sánchez Reynafé.

Meanwhile, Major Juan José Montiel Forzano, an officer with liberal ideas, was corresponding with Colonel Carlos Toranzo Montero. Toranzo convinced him to set up a rebel focus in the northeast region and to contact the commander of the IV Cavalry Division, General Astolfo Giorello. Giorello said that he was an anti-Peronist and that he had spoken with his immediate collaborators: in the event of a new rebellion, they would begin by being neutral. In any case, Montiel Forzano recruited several representatives from each unit for his plot: Captains Eduardo Montés, Claudio Mas, Francisco Balestra; 1st Lieutenants Oscar Ismael Tesón, Jorge Cisternas, Hipólito Villamayor, Julián Chiappe; and Lieutenant Ricardo García del Hoyo.

Another coup group emerged at the National Military School. Major Dámaso Pérez Cartaibo and Captain Guillermo Genta gathered around them Captains Alfredo Formigioni, Jorge Rafael Videla (who would be the president of Argentina from 1976 to 1981), and Hugo Elizalde. Dámaso Pérez contacted General Juan José Uranga and thus entered the conspiracy of Guevara, Señorans and Aramburu.

Retired General Eduardo Lonardi lived apart from his former colleagues, but visits from Colonels Cornejo Saravia and Ossorio Arana brought him to the knowledge of the plot led by General Aramburu. In early August 1955, Lonardi went to speak with Aramburu to offer support and assistance. Aramburu replied: 'Your offer surprises me, because there is no movement that I lead, nor do I intend to conspire […] I do not conspire, nor will I conspire.'[4]

On 10 August, during the court martial against those involved in the June uprising, the sentence was handed down against Rear

Admiral Samuel Toranzo Calderón and those who accompanied him in the June uprising. Due to the intervention of President Perón, Toranzo was not sentenced to death; instead, he was demoted and sentenced to indeterminate imprisonment. The other leaders of the uprising received different penalties according to their degree of participation.

APPENDIX I

ARGENTINE NAVY SHIPS IN THE MID-1950s

Table 6: Argentine Navy Ships in the mid-1950s				
Type	**Pennant No.**	**Name**	**Displacement (Tons)**	**Crew**
Battleship	-	ARA *Moreno**	31,000	1,215
Battleship	-	ARA *Rivadavia**	31,000	1,215
Heavy Cruiser	C-1	ARA *Almirante Brown*	8,600	600
Heavy Cruiser	C-2	ARA *Veinticinco de Mayo*	8,600	600
Heavy Cruiser	C-3	ARA *La Argentina*	8,632	800
Heavy Cruiser	C-4	ARA *17 de Octubre*/ ARA *General Belgrano*	12,650	868
Heavy Cruiser	C-5	ARA *Nueve de Julio*	13,430	1,100
Corvette	P-10	ARA *República*	1,375	154
Frigate	P-31	ARA *Hércules*	1,400	175
Frigate	P-32	ARA *Heroína*	1,400	175
Frigate	P-33	ARA *Sarandí*	2,320	175
Frigate	P-34	ARA *Santísima Trinidad*	1,400	175
Frigate	P-36	ARA *Piedra Buena*	1,220	170
Destroyer	D-4	ARA *La Plata*	1,368	128
Minesweeper	M-2	ARA *Drummond*	554	70
Minesweeper	M-3	ARA *Robinson*	554	70
Minesweeper	M-4	ARA *Granville*	554	70
Minesweeper	M-6	ARA *Pinedo*	550	50
Minesweeper	M-7	ARA *Bouchard*	520	70
Minesweeper	M-10	ARA *Py*	550	50
Minesweeper	M-11	ARA *Parker*	550	70
Minesweeper	M-12	ARA *Seaver*	550	70
Minesweeper	M-13	ARA *Spiro*	550	70
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-1	ARA *Cervantes*	2,072	180
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-2	ARA *Juan de Garay*	2,072	180
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-3	ARA *Mendoza*	2,416	179
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-4	ARA *La Rioja*	2,370	196
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-5	ARA *Tucumán*	2,235	196
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-6	ARA *Buenos Aires*	1,950	200
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-7	ARA *Entre Rios*	1,950	200
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-9	ARA *San Juan*	1,950	200
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-10	ARA *San Luís*	1,950	200
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-11	ARA *Misiones*	1,950	200
Torpedo Ship/Destroyer	T-12	ARA *Santa Cruz*	1,950	200
Patrol Boat	P-20	ARA *Murature*	1,030	130
Type	**Pennant No.**	**Name**	**Displacement (Tons)**	**Crew**

Table 6: Argentine Navy Ships in the mid-1950s (*continued*)

Patrol Boat	P-21	ARA *King*	1,030	130
Gun Boat	-	ARA *Paraná*	1,250	173
Gun Boat	-	ARA *Rosario*	1,250	173
PT Boat	P-55	ARA *Surubí*	65	4/5
PT Boat	P-80	ARA LT1	52	15
PT Boat	P-81	ARA LT2	52	15
PT Boat	P-82	ARA LT3 / *Towora*	52	15
PT Boat	P-83	ARA LT4	52	15
PT Boat	P-84	ARA LT5 / *Alakush*	52	15
PT Boat	P-85	ARA LT6	52	15
PT Boat	P-86	ARA LT7	52	15
PT Boat	P-87	ARA LT8	52	15
PT Boat	P-88	ARA LT9	52	15
PT Boat	P-89	ARA LT10	52	15
Submarine	S-1	ARA *Santa Fé*	920	64
Submarine	S-2	ARA *Santiago del Estero*	920	64
Submarine	S-3	ARA *Salta*	920	64
Beacon Boat	No.1	ARA *Alférez MacKinlay*	700	50
Transport Ship	B-2	ARA *Bahía Aguirre*	5,308	100
Transport Ship	B-6	ARA *Bahía Buen Suceso*	5,305	100
Transport Ship	B-7	ARA *San Julián*	953	40
Transport Ship	B-8	ARA *Bahía Thetis*	5,225	100
Transport Ship	B-10	ARA *Lapataia*	6,000	100
Transport Ship	B-11	ARA *Le Maire*	6,000	100
Transport Ship	B-12	ARA *Les Eclaireurs*	6,000	100
Hydrographic Boat	Q-7	ARA *Bahía Blanca*	970	92
Hydrographic Boat	-	ARA *Madryn*	970	92
Hydrographic Boat	-	ARA *San Luis*	830	65
Hydrographic Boat	Q-15	ARA *Cormorán*	99	21
Hydrographic Boat	RHF2 / A-8	ARA *Sanaviron*	800	50
Oceanographic Ship	Q-3	ARA *Capitán Canepa*	1,250	70
LSM	Q-69	ARA BDM-1	?	?
LSM	Q-70	ARA BDM-2	?	?
LCIL	BDI-1 to BDI-15	-	380	20/25
LST	Q-41 / BDT-1	ARA *Cabo San Bartolomé*	8,000	50
LST	BDT-2	ARA *Cabo San Diego*	8,000	50
LST	BDT-3	ARA *Cabo San Francisco de Paula*	8,000	50
LST	BDT-4	ARA *Cabo San Gonzalo*	8,000	50
LST	BDT-5	ARA *Cabo Buen Tiempo*	8,000	50
LST	BDT-6	ARA *Cabo San Isidro*	8,000	50
LST	BDT-7	ARA *Cabo San Pablo*	8,000	50
LST	Q-50 / BDT-10	ARA *Cabo San Pío*	8,000	50
LST	BDT-11	ARA *Cabo San Sebastian*	8,000	50
LST	BDT-12	-	8,000	50
LST	BDT-14	ARA *Cabo San Vicente*	8,000	50
Ocean Tug	A-1	ARA *Comandante General Yrigoyen*	1,850	65
Type	**Pennant No.**	**Name**	**Displacement (Tons)**	**Crew**

Table 6: Argentine Navy Ships in the mid-1950s (*continued*)

Ocean Tug	A-2	ARA *Comandante General Zapiola*	1,675	80
Ocean Tug	A-5	ARA *Diaguita*	814	50
Ocean Tug	A-6	ARA *Yamana*	800	50
Ocean Tug	A-7	ARA *Chiriguano*	800	50
Ocean Tug	A-10	ARA *Comodoro Somellera*	897	47
Ocean Tug	-	ARA *Petrel*	500	50
Tug	R-6	ARA *Mataco*	340	35
Tug	R-7	ARA *Toba*	340	35
Tug	R-9	ARA *Ona*	620	30
Tug	R-10	ARA *Querandí*	620	30/35
Tug	R-18	ARA *Corvina*	180	7
Tug	R-29	ARA *Pehuenche*	330	14
Tug	R-30	ARA *Tonocote*	330	14
Rescue Ship	-	ARA *Charrúa*	982	40
Presidential Yacht	Q-72	ARA *Tecuara*	295	10
Workshop Vessel	Q-21	ARA *Ingeniero Iribas*	4,080	120
Workshop Vessel	Q-22	ARA *Ingeniero Gadda*	4,080	120
Gasoline Tanker	B-16	ARA *Punta Delgada*	6,187	90
Gasoline Tanker	B-18	ARA *Punta Médanos*	16,300	140
Gasoline Tanker	B-21	ARA *Punta Alta*	1,900	40
Gasoline Tanker	-	ARA *Punta Cigueña*	2,253	37
Gasoline Tanker	-	ARA *Punta Loyola*	6,300	90

*Not in active service. Used as warehouses, barracks and military prisons.

APPENDIX II

ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES RANKS (OFFICERS)

Table 7: Argentine Armed Forces Ranks (Officers)

Argentine Army	Argentine Navy	Argentine Air Force
Teniente General (Lieutenant General)	*Almirante* (Admiral)	*Brigadier General* (Brigadier General)
General de División (Major General)	*Vicealmirante* (Vice Admiral)	*Brigadier Mayor* (Brigadier Major)
General de Brigada (Brigadier General)	*Contraalmirante* (Rear Admiral)	*Brigadier* (Brigadier)
Coronel Mayor (Colonel Major)	*Comodoro de Marina* (Commodore of the Navy)	*Comodoro Mayor* (Commodore Major)
Coronel (Colonel)	*Capitán de Navío* (Captain)	*Comodoro* (Commodore)
Teniente Coronel (Lieutenant Colonel)	*Capitán de Fragata* (Commander)	*Vicecomodoro* (Vice Commodore)
Mayor (Major)	*Capitán de Corbeta* (Lieutenant Commander)	*Mayor* (Major)
Capitán (Captain)	*Teniente de Navío* (Ship Lieutenant)	*Capitán* (Captain)
Teniente Primero (1st Lieutenant)	*Teniente de Fragata* (Frigate Lieutenant)	*Primer Teniente* (1st Lieutenant)
Teniente (Lieutenant)	*Teniente de Corbeta* (Corvette Lieutenant)	*Teniente* (Lieutenant)
Subteniente (Sub-Lieutenant)	*Guardiamarina* (Midshipman)	*Alférez* (Ensign)

ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES RANKS (NCOs)

Table 8: Argentine Armed Forces Ranks (NCOs)

Argentine Army	**Argentine Navy**	**Argentine Air Force**
Sub Oficial Mayor (Chief Warrant Officer)	*Sub Oficial Mayor* (Master Chief Petty Officer)	*Sub Oficial Mayor* (Chief Warrant Officer)
Sub Oficial Principal (Deputy Chief Officer)	*Sub Oficial Principal* (Deputy Chief Officer)	*Sub Oficial Principal* (Deputy Chief Officer)
Sargento Ayudante (Assistant Sergeant)	*Sub Oficial Primero* (Chief Warrant Officer)	*Sub Oficial Ayudante* (Assistant Chief Officer)
Sargento Primero (First Sergeant)	*Sub Oficial Segundo* (2nd Chief Warrant Officer)	*Sub Oficial Auxiliar* (Auxiliary Chief Officer)
Sargento (Sergeant)	*Cabo Principal* (Chief Corporal)	*Cabo Principal* (Chief Corporal)
Cabo Primero (First Corporal)	*Cabo Primero* (First Corporal)	*Cabo Primero* (First Corporal)
Cabo (Corporal)	*Cabo Segundo* (Second Corporal)	*Cabo Segundo* (Second Corporal)

ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES RANKS (ENLISTED)

Table 9: Argentine Armed Forces Ranks (enlisted)

Argentine Army	**Argentine Navy**	**Argentine Air Force**
Cadete (Cadet)	*Cadete* (Cadet)	*Cadete* (Cadet)
Aspirante (Aspirant)	*Aspirante* (Aspirant)	*Aspirante* (Aspirant)
Dragoneante (Dragoneant)	*Dragoneante* (Dragoneant)	*Dragoneante* (Dragoneant)
Soldado (Soldier)	*Conscripto* (Conscript)	*Soldado* (Soldier)

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NOTES

Introduction

1 Not to be confused with guerrillas.

Chapter 1

1 Literally the 'Pink House', this is the office of the president of Argentina, and is also known as Government House.

Chapter 2

1 Isidoro Ruiz Moreno, *La Revolución del 55.*

2 The *Regimento Blindado de Tiradores*, light infantry mounted in M3 half-tracks.

Chapter 3

None

Chapter 4

None

Chapter 5

None

Chapter 6

1 Isidoro Ruiz Moreno, *La Revolución del 55.*

Chapter 7

None

Chapter 8

1 Robert A. Potash, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1945–1962.*

2 Joseph Page, *Perón, a Biography.*

3 Isidoro Ruiz Moreno, *La Revolución del 55.*

4 Robert A. Potash, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1945–1962.*

5 Isidoro Ruiz Moreno, *La Revolución del 55.*

6 Juan Salidas et. al., *Bombardeo del 16 de Junio de 1955.*

7 Joseph Page, *Perón, a Biography.*

Chapter 9

1 Isidoro Ruiz Moreno, *La Revolución del 55.*

2 Isidoro Ruiz Moreno, *La Revolución del 55.*

3 Bonifacio del Carril, *Crónica Interna de la Revolución Libertadora.*

4 Isidoro Ruiz Moreno, *La Revolución del 55.*

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Antonio Luis Sapienza Fracchia was born in Asunción, Paraguay on 14 May 1960. He graduated from the Catholic University of Asunción where he obtained a B.A. in Clinical Psychology. He also took specialised English courses at Tulane University of New Orleans, Louisiana, and teaching methodology at San Diego State University in California. He is now retired but worked for nearly 40 years as an English teacher and one of the Academic Coordinators at the Centro Cultural Paraguayo-Americano (CCPA), a binational institute in Asunción. Married with two children, he resides in the capital. He is an aviation historian who has written more than 500 articles in specialised magazines and web pages on Paraguayan aviation history and has given numerous lectures in schools, universities, institutes, military and civil institutions in Paraguay and abroad. Since 2010, he has been an aviation history professor in the Paraguayan Air Force (FAP). He has published 19 books since 1996, being this one his sixth with Helion. He received a total of six decorations for his academic merits, two from Argentina, one from Brazil and three from his own country, Paraguay.